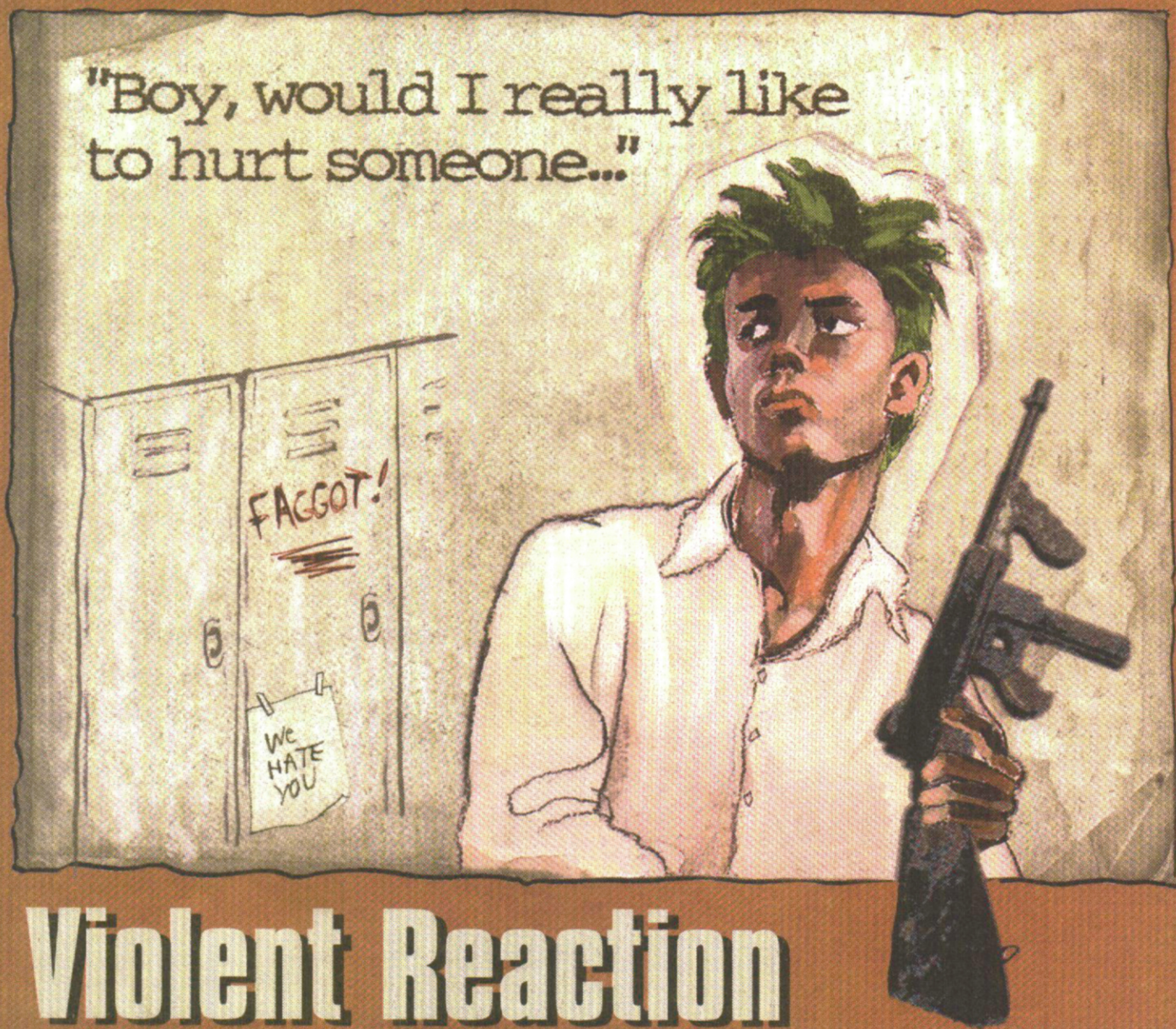


In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

July 9, 2001

"Boy, would I really like
to hurt someone..."



Violent Reaction

What do teen killers have in common?

\$2.50 Canada \$3.50

Anthony Chase investigates



www.inthesetimes.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

"... with liberty and justice for all"

James Weinstein
Founding Editor and Publisher

Editor: Joel Bleifuss

Managing Editor: Craig Aaron

Senior Editors: Patricia Aufderheide, David

Moberg, Salim Muwakkil

Associate Editor: Kristin Kolb-Angelbeck

Culture Editor: Joe Knowles

Contributing Editors: Terry J. Allen, Bill Boisvert, Barbara Ehrenreich, Laura Flanders, Annette Fuentes, Juan Gonzalez, David Graeber, Miles Harvey, Paul Hockenros, George Hodak, Doug Ireland, Dave Mulcahey, Kim Phillips-Fein, Jeffrey St. Clair, Jane Slaughter, Jason Vest, Fred Weir, G. Pascal Zachary

Proofreaders: Jean Kang, Alan Kimmel, Norman Wishner

Interns: Emily Brooks, Erin Hamilton, Esra Khalil

Art Director: Jim Rinnert

Associate Art Director: Steve Anderson

Illustrator: Terry LaBan

Webmaster: Steve Anderson

Publisher: Bob Burnett

Associate Publisher: Julie Fain

Circulation Director: Luli Buxton

Circulation Manager: Peter Hoyt

In These Times (ISSN 0160-5992) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 25, No. 16) went to press on June 8 for newsstand sales June 25 to July 9, 2001.

The entire contents of *In These Times* are copyright ©2001 by the Institute for Public Affairs, and may not be reproduced in any manner, either in whole or in part, without permission of the publisher. Copies of *In These Times* contract with the National Writers Union are available upon request. Contact the union at (212) 254-0279 or <http://www.nwu.org>.

Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). For **subscription questions** and **address changes** call (800) 827-0270.

Editorial correspondence and **letters** should be sent to: 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. Phone: (773) 772-0100. Fax: (773) 772-4180. E-mail: itt@inthesetimes.com.

Publisher does not assume liability for **unsolicited manuscripts** or material. Manuscripts unaccompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope will not be returned. **All letters** received by *In These Times* become property of the magazine. We reserve the right to print letters in condensed form.

For back issues and advertising rates, call toll free (888) READ-ITT. Available back issues are \$3 each, \$5 each overseas. Complete issues and volumes of *In These Times* are available from Bell and Howell, Ann Arbor, MI. *In These Times* is indexed in the Alternative Press Index and the Left Index. Newsstand circulation through the IPA International Sales Cooperative at (415) 643-4401, or jesse@bigtoppubs.com.

® GCU 759-C



Publisher's Notes

With the passage of the deplorable tax cut and the conversion of Sen. Jim Jeffords, we've concluded phase one of the reign of George II. So far, the conservatives are riding high. Most of the recent news has centered on their initiatives and ultimate triumphs, with little positive coverage of the Democrats and even less about progressives. We're caught up in a strong conservative current.

This situation brings to mind the dangerous surf conditions that you sometimes encounter when swimming in the Pacific. Riptides—powerful transient currents—suddenly appear and begin to pull you out to sea. The initial reaction is to panic and fight against them. This is the worst response because it saps your energy and can result in drowning. The best recovery is to relax and drift with the current until a big wave shows up. You then catch it and bodysurf back in.

At the moment, progressives are caught in a conservative riptide. In response we tend to panic—to flail about and sap our energy. The optimal response would be to watch for big waves and ride them out of the sphere of conservative influence. There are several such waves (or national issues) that progressives could utilize to disrupt the conservative riptide if they are clever.

The first is the economy. The coming recession will send a shock throughout an administration that hasn't developed

any economic strategy beyond cutting taxes (a.k.a. "Brother George's magic elixir"). Progressives can use this period of negative

growth to point out that tax cuts—primarily aimed at the rich—are not the solution. Instead, we need to reinstate the social safety net and initiate a national jobs program.

The second big wave is energy. The Bush administration doesn't understand that skyrocketing energy costs will contribute to the recession by increasing prices and further reducing productivity. (For example, this summer California expects that businesses will be closed one out of every five working days due to blackouts.) The progressive response should be to construct a realistic alternative energy plan—one that relies upon price caps, conservation and challenging America's "live for today" lifestyle.

The third is the environment. The convergence of the energy crisis and the

resulting threats to the environment presents an opportunity for progressives to form a much stronger alliance with environmentalists and advocate a sane, job-creating national energy policy.

This combination of a faltering economy, rising energy costs and a growing threat to the environment gives progressives the three best opportunities to challenge the Republican agenda. But there are also others.

The fourth wave is the proposed National Missile Defense (NMD) system. This proposal destabilizes the network of non-proliferation agreements and threatens to initiate a new arms race. Our allies don't like it, fearing that NMD is actually an offensive weapon that will permit American armed might to attack anywhere in the world. Progressives can use this reaction to stop the NMD and challenge the entire program of increased military spending.

The fifth is globalization. Globalization is inevitable, but it is wrong-headed to interpret it in purely economic terms—the expansion of the global marketplace. Globalization can also be seen as a burgeoning realization worldwide that we are members of an interdependent global community and environment. Progressives can seize on this new awareness as an opportunity to unite labor unions, environmentalists and social justice advocates in

We're caught in a conservative riptide. Instead of panicking, we have to watch for the big waves to ride out.

an international push for decent jobs and humane living conditions.

The sixth is the realization that the Bush administration has substituted "leave no child untested" in place of a commitment to "leave no child behind." The use of this slogan symbolizes an administration that is more about appearances than substance. This transparent vapidness offers progressives an opportunity to formulate an alternative, comprehensive education (and child welfare) program that could do some real good.

As always, I welcome your feedback (bburnett@inthesetimes.com).

Bob Burnett

In These Times

Volume 25, Number 16

July 9, 2001

www.inthesetimes.com

2 Letters

3 Editorial By David Moberg

Opportunity knocks.

4 News

Zapatistas go home, you've got hate mail, starving for education, and Granny B's journey from jail to the campaign trail.

6 Appall-o-Meter By Dave Mulcahey

Features

10 Fishy Business

By Jeffrey St. Clair

The aluminum industry exploits the energy crisis, gouges consumers and threatens salmon.

12 The Class War's Next Attack?

By Geov Parrish

The tax cut is just the beginning.

14 The Sounds of Silence

By G. Pascal Zachary

Cambodia avoids the past.

16 Violent Reaction

By Anthony Chase

What do teen killers have in common?

19 AIDS Strikes Back

By Hans Johnson

20 In Defense of Identity Politics

By Martin Duberman

22 It's Up to You, New York

By Bill Boisvert

BOOKS: *America's Undeclared War* against the cities.

24 Seeing Red

By A.S. Hamrah

FILM: Visions of the *Moulin Rouge*.

26 Make the Voices Stop

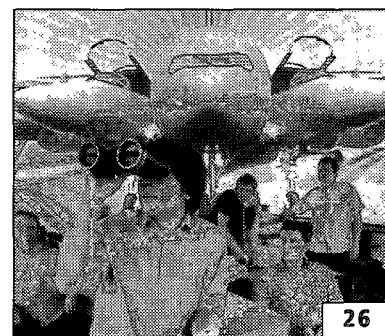
By Hillary Frey

MUSIC: Somebody, please keep Robert Pollard in *Isolation*.

30 Out of Africa

By G. Pascal Zachary

Tribal art is booming—but the colonial legacy remains.



Cover collage: Jim Rinnert

Letters

The Missing Solution

Salim Muwakkil's editorial does a good job of historicizing the problem of police violence against black citizens as the precursor to urban violence over the past century ("Cincinnati Blues," May 28). But he forgot to mention something important.

In singling out causes, as well as in proposing solutions, the Kerner Commission in the late '60s focused on the news media. Mainstream news, the report said, had not done an adequate job of conveying the misery of inner-city residents or helping the public to understand racism. In addition, most reporters were found to be white and middle-class with little understanding of urban conditions or contacts among black leaders. Sources in news stories on race were found overwhelmingly to be white male police and elected officials. Broadcast news, particularly, showed angry and violent acts by blacks and other minorities but failed to give minority spokespersons an opportunity to explain why they were so angry.

The Kerner Commission recommended that newsrooms involve black leaders and editors of black newspapers more actively as consultants in defining issues, developing stories and in finding spokespersons on a range of topics related to inner-city neighborhoods. As a long-range strategy, the report suggested that schools of journalism should recruit and educate minority reporters, and that newsrooms should hire and promote them. Sadly, the journalism community has made minimal progress in any of these areas.

Carolyn M. Byerly
Ithaca, New York

NOW What?

I was angered by Miranda Kennedy's misrepresentation of NOW and the hard work that went into the April 22 march in Washington ("NOW or Never," May 28). First, the crowd was not just middle-class, white women. I worked parking for the event and know that all types of people attended the rally.

The visual that Kennedy drew of young, white women decorating the lawn of the rally site and fanning themselves is ludicrous. People were signing petitions, making signs and listening to speakers who, like their audience, were also enraged at the Bush administration's efforts to undermine choice.

Yes, the march was "carefully orchestrated." Activists from all over the country, NOW members and nonmembers, put their everyday lives on hold for two months to plan that action.

Kennedy inaccurately implied that NOW fully supported every decision made under the Clinton administration dealing with women's rights. Not so. Unlike the previous administration, however, the Bush administration poses an enormous threat to women's lives.

NOW was aware of the other events going on that same day. Other activists were fighting for human rights in other parts of the continent simultaneously, but there was no collision of events. I know activists who could not make the Quebec event and attended NOW's rally instead.

The last thing that pissed me off about Kennedy's article was the conclusion: "Still, although many marchers in Washington were first-time activists, many of them were also one-issue activists. Until that changes, mainstream feminism isn't going to look like democracy any more than Woodstock did."

The march was for a single issue—reproductive rights. If Kennedy had ever participated in a movement she would know that it takes both single-issue and multi-issue people and organizations to make our voices heard.

Stefanie Richards
Washington

Miranda Kennedy responds: *By taking the NOW demonstration to task, I was not undermining the importance of organizing for reproductive rights or the work that NOW does. The rally was an uplifting moment, proving there are thousands who will leave their homes on a Sunday to show their intolerance for the new administration.*

However, the rally was not only called to support reproductive rights, as Richards suggests. The "Emergency Action for Women's Lives" aimed to address a series of issues that affect women, according to the organizers. But NOW's attempt to place the global gag rule and mifepristone within the larger framework of a progressive crisis seemed skin-deep to many there that day—partly because the Quebec City anti-globalization protests were happening simultaneously. Some activists were frustrated at having to choose between issues.

This is not just the fault of NOW; the problem stems from the feminist movement itself. For too long, women of color and young women have felt excluded from feminism. For too long, the feminist movement has not genuinely allied itself with other struggles—against poverty, police brutality, environmental racism and unfair working conditions. As many NOW supporters are aware, fallout from corporate globalization hits working women the hardest. Inclusion cannot be superficial if feminism is to really become a multi-issue movement.

Her Way My Way

I appreciate Tracie McMillan's original and useful thoughts in her review of my book, *Her Way* ("Generation Sex," May 28). However, the critic wrongly describes me as an "essentialist"—defining having sex without an emotional connection, as essentially male and unnaturally female. I don't remember ever saying that (or even thinking that). Instead, I point out that we are socialized to view sexual permissiveness as a traditionally male trait, and connecting sex with emotion or love as traditionally female.

In my conclusion I state that in the future women should not imitate how men have been expected to act traditionally. We should not only define "sexual liberation" in terms of disconnecting sex from emotion (the major change in women of the past 30 years). But that a greater (and just beginning) challenge of truly getting to "her way" means broadening the possibilities, of women doing it on their own terms, whatever they may be—virginal, permissive or somewhere in between. This is neither an indictment of the gains of the sexual revolution, nor a commentary about women's "natural" roles. While I report on women's standard criticisms of the '70s sexual revolution, I also recognize that it was a positive thing for many, kicking open the door against centuries of painful repression.

Paula Kamen
Chicago

Tracie McMillan responds: *I concede that my analysis of Kamen's book may have been worded too strongly with regards to its tendency toward essentializing rhetoric. The frustrating thing is that while the points Kamen raises in her response are intelligent and important ones, I don't think they were carried through the book consistently. But what concerns me far more than this discussion of essentialist vs. nonessentialist was how exceedingly white and bourgeois the entire book was. Like most of our generation, Kamen appropriately noted that there are differences between women which stem from race and class—and did very little to use that analysis in a concrete way. To my mind, that is a far more troubling critique than the one with which she takes issue above.*

Please send letters to:

IN THESE TIMES

2040 N. Milwaukee Ave.

Chicago, IL 60647

Or e-mail: itt@inthesetimes.com

Please keep your letter short and include your address and daytime phone number.

Opportunity Knocks

By David Moberg

The shift in control of the Senate gives the Democrats an opportunity to do not only what is right for the country, but what is good politics. President Bush has no mandate, and the Democrats shouldn't forget it.

First, they have a chance to block many of the worst Bush initiatives and appointments, bottling them up in committees and investigating them thoroughly. The Republicans will charge that the Democrats are simply being obstructionists. Americans may rightly object to obstructionism as a petty exercise in retaliation—although that was part of the Republican strategy against President Clinton. But Democrats can gain political stature if they explain at every opportunity why it is good for the country to stop Bush.

Second, Democrats now have an opportunity to promote an alternative to Bush, who, despite clever political rhetoric, is an even more obedient servant of corporations, the wealthy and the political right than either his father or Ronald Reagan was. Democrats can propose using government to curb the power of giant corporations and to help both the average citizen and the especially needy cope with the insecurities of contemporary life. Tom Daschle and Co. are not likely to get much past the House or the president, but that's not a problem. They shouldn't attempt to govern from such a tenuous hold on one branch of government, but they must demonstrate what they could do—and would do—if they had control.

The Republicans clearly have no hesitation about fighting hard and nasty while blathering about bipartisanship. So instead of moving to the right to compromise with Bush, the Democrats should force him to move left—and demonstrate his supposed "compassion"—or reject his initiatives. They can paint Bush and the Republicans as the ogres who don't want kids to have health insurance, who don't care if older people are rendered destitute by price-gouging

pharmaceutical companies, who think people should work 40 hours a week and still not make enough to lift their families out of poverty.

If the Republicans complain there isn't enough money to fix urban schools or fully fund Head Start, then the Democrats can simply remind everyone of how many schools could be brought up to decent standards with the tax cuts received by a few thousand millionaires. It would be far better to fight for something worthwhile and lose than to accept watered-down alternatives that will simply give Republicans political cover. Polls suggest that people will respond favorably to an aggressive strategy of fighting for working people and their families, and Democrats should be using their limited power in the Senate to try to strengthen popular backing for progressive policies.

Senate committee chairs should conduct hearings, taking them around the country to mobilize public sup-

port, not only on specific legislation, but on broad social issues—such as the causes and consequences of growing inequality or the ways in which national health insurance has been enacted in every other industrialized country. They also should use their bully pulpit to demonstrate how Bush's energy plan primarily benefits the energy companies and how a strategy emphasizing energy efficiency is the best alternative for jobs as well as the environment.

If people see the Democrats as truly fighting for them, they will lay the foundation to win future elections and to build the kind of popular progressive mandate they will need,

The Democrats must demonstrate what they could do—and would do—if they had control.

especially to swing unreliable conservative Democrats and the few remaining moderate Republicans. The big question is whether Democrats have the will and the unity to do what they should. Their collapse in the fight over Bush's tax plan—which wasn't even very popular—raises serious doubts about their capabilities.

Here is the window of opportunity to show they represent a real alternative. ■



Welcome Back to the Jungle

Mexican Congress guts indigenous rights bill

By Rick Mercier

The Zapatistas appeared to have the wind at their backs in March. They had just made history by riding triumphantly into Mexico City, culminating a two-week, 12-state tour in which they spoke to hundreds of thousands of Mexicans from all walks of life.

The insurgents from Chiapas hoped their tour would compel the Mexican Congress to pass an indigenous rights bill based on the San Andres Accords, an agreement the rebels and government negotiators reached in February 1996 (see "Zapalooza," April 16). The accords laid the groundwork for amending the Mexican Constitution to guarantee local indigenous self-rule in accordance with traditional customs, regional indigenous autonomy on issues such as native languages, and collective control of community land and natural resources in indigenous territories.

The Zapatistas viewed these proposed changes to the constitution as crucial to ensuring justice for Mexico's 10 million indigenous people, and they went to the capital with their hopes pinned on a bill that a nonpartisan legislative commission had drafted and President Vicente Fox had submitted to Congress immediately after his inauguration in December 2000.

But after Congress finished with the bill, it scarcely looked like what the rebels had envisioned. The revised bill passed by legislators at the end of April left to state legislatures the responsibility of defining the terms of local self-rule for indigenous communities,

omitted provisions for regional autonomy, and added protections for private land holdings in indigenous areas. The legislation also said indigenous communities would have preference, but not exclusive rights, to natural resources in their territories.

While Fox praised the revised bill, calling it a positive first step toward renewing peace talks with the Zapatistas, the rebels denounced it and cancelled plans to restart direct dialogue with the government.

invalidating a process of dialogue and negotiation."

Many members of Congress argue that they had to defend property rights and prevent the balkanization of the country, but some politicians joined the Zapatistas in rejecting the legislation. Chiapas Gov. Pablo Salazar called the bill a "triumph for conservatism."

Since the measure involves amending the constitution, 17 of the country's 32 federal entities must ratify it. Although southern states with large indigenous populations, such as Chiapas and Oaxaca, will likely reject the measure, its chances of becoming law look promising.

Seven state legislatures have approved the bill so far, despite demonstrations. In Puebla, 200 protesters from indigenous groups shouted "Traitors!" and "Racists!" at legislators who voted in favor of the bill, according to the Mexico Solidarity Network. In Queretaro, local indigenous people and representatives of more than 30 non-governmental and indigenous organizations threw coins in protest at state deputies after they ratified the measure. If the bill becomes law, members of Mexico's National Indigenous Congress have vowed to set up road blocks and occupy government buildings.

In Chiapas, the low-intensity war—which has caused the deaths of hundreds and displacement of tens of thousands of indigenous people in the past seven years—continues. In Polho, a Zapatista stronghold sheltering 11,000 displaced rebel sympathizers, residents tell Dave McConnell of Pastors for Peace that anti-Zapatista paramilitaries—who operate with impunity in the conflict zone—are still active in the state's central highlands.

McConnell says people have little faith in the government. "There's some sense of a sliver of hope," he says. "But there's also cynicism about the political situation." ■

Freelance writer Rick Mercier accompanied the Zapatour to Mexico City.



Subcommandante Marcos is bathed in incense during a celebration in Oventic, Chiapas. Thousands attended the April 1 event to welcome home the Zapatistas.

The Zapatistas contend that Congress—perhaps with Fox's tacit approval—has made a mockery of the San Andres Accords. "With these reforms, federal legislators and the Fox government are closing the door on dialogue and peace, since they are preventing a resolution of one of the causes which led to the Zapatista uprising," read a Zapatista public statement. "They give a *raison d'être* to armed groups in Mexico by

You've Got Hate Mail

Extremist Web site targets Jews for criticizing Israel

By Ian Urbina

Hate mail and death threats can be par for the course for public figures with dissenting opinions, especially on Israel and the occupied territories. But Rabbi Michael Lerner, editor of liberal Zionist *Tikkun* magazine, was shocked when the intimidation took a new turn. In May, an extremist pro-Israel Web site called "Masada 2000" listed Lerner as one of "the five most dangerous Jewish enemies of the Jewish people," and posted detailed driving directions to his home address. Draped in guillotines, nooses and racist language, the site repeatedly stated: "If you're ever in the San Francisco area, drop in on him at his home."

Predictably, the death threats and hate e-mails started pouring in—more than 60 to date. Late-night calls also drastically increased. "Both my wife and I were extremely scared," Lerner says.

So Lerner notified the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), a watchdog of hate crimes. "They did exactly zero," Lerner says, "except tell us that this wasn't a hate crime."

The ADL defines hate crimes as those directed against people for their religion, race or ethnicity, and in their view, this was a purely political attack. Yet the Web page is titled "With Jews like these" and targets individuals not just for their criticism of Israel, but specifically for being Jews with that stance. Others targeted on the site are: Dedi Zucker, formerly of Peace Now; liberal Knesset member Ran Cohen; Israel Shahak, Holocaust survivor and current chairman of the Israeli League of Human Civil Rights; and Noam Chomsky. Woody Allen also is lambasted for having asked, "What gives the Jews the right to beat up Palestinians who want only the same rights that Jews have in the country that used to be theirs?"

Such Internet-based intimidation was originally and effectively used by

anti-abortion extremists. In March, the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled in favor of a similar Web site called "The Nuremberg Files" on free speech grounds. The anti-choice site includes "wanted" posters naming abortion providers who are crossed off as they are murdered.

In late May, Masada 2000 added a note advising viewers not to threaten Lerner's life, stating that "God will deal with the likes of him soon enough."

Tikkun was founded in 1986. After just a few issues were published, board member Elie Wiesel left in protest. In 1988, when the first Intifada broke out, other board members—including Alex Schindler, former president of the Reform Judaism movement—also walked. "Schindler was a strong advocate for peace negotiations," Lerner notes, "but *Tikkun's* call for an end to the occupation was too radical for him. It's always been a politically expensive position to take, but the right one."

After Lerner's call about the threats, the ADL did notify the FBI, which eventually visited Lerner and told him that there was little they could do. But it's the ADL's unwillingness to take on the case that most bothers Lerner. "It's

ridiculous," he says. "The ADL carries a lot of clout in the Jewish community. The ADL simply needed to follow their standard procedure and put out a public statement saying that such threats were inappropriate. You can bet that if the exact same Web site had led to death threats on the Conference of Presidents [of Major American Jewish Organizations], the ADL would have had something to say about it."

Both the ADL and the FBI declined to comment for this story, but Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL, did send out a mass e-mail calling Lerner's criticisms "baloney" and claiming that the ADL does not turn to the press for such matters.

This is not the first scuffle between Lerner and the ADL, nor is the ADL shy about voicing their opinions in the press. The most recent tussle occurred in February when Lerner published an op-ed in the *Los Angeles Times* calling for an end to the Israeli occupation. The ADL followed with an angry letter to the editor, calling Lerner's piece "a thinly veiled attack on Israel and its governments (past and present)."

Clearly, it's not just hate crimes that move the ADL to action. ■

THIS MODERN WORLD

BY TOM TOMORROW

KARL ROVE IS EXASPERATED THAT JIM JEFFORDS WOULD SUDDENLY DECIDE THAT HE COULDN'T SUPPORT--
"--AN AGENDA THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS SPENT TWO YEARS TALKING ABOUT!"



AND RIGHTLY SO! WHY, AS FAR BACK AS THE PRIMARY SEASON, BUSH MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE INTENDED--
"--TO FILL THE WHITE HOUSE WITH MORE RIGHT WING NUTJOBS THAN YOU CAN SHAKE A DIPSTICK AT!"

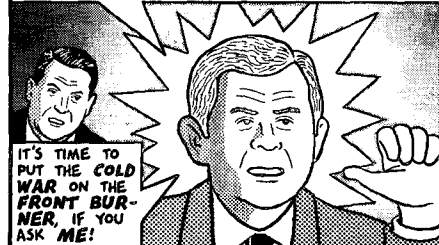


AND WHO COULD EVER FORGET HIS STRAIGHTFORWARD AND UNAPOLOGETIC SUMMARY OF HIS GOVERNING PHILOSOPHY ON THE LAST NIGHT OF THE REPUBLICAN CONVENTION...
"I'M A DIVIDER--NOT A UNITER! IT'S MY WAY--OR THE HIGHWAY!"



...NOT TO MENTION THE UNAMBIGUOUS MANNER IN WHICH HE OUTLINED THE SPECIFICS OF HIS AGENDA DURING THE THREE PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES!

--AND IF I'M ELECTED, THE ABM TREATY IS HISTORY--AND I DON'T CARE WHAT ANY OF THOSE DAMN FOREIGNERS THINK ABOUT IT!



IT'S TIME TO PUT THE COLD WAR ON THE FRONT BURNER, IF YOU ASK ME!

SO THE QUESTION REMAINS...HOW COULD JEFFORDS POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN DISAPPOINTED BY ANYTHING BUSH HAS DONE SINCE TAKING OFFICE--UNLESS THERE'S MORE GOING ON HERE THAN MEETS THE EYE...?

MAYBE HE WAS CAPTURED BY EVIL DEMOCRATS AND BRAIN-WASHED!

OR PERHAPS HE IS AN ALIEN REPLICANT--POSING AS JIM JEFFORDS!

ANYTHING WOULD MAKE MORE SENSE--

--THAN THIS CRAZY TALK ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S AGENDA!



TOM TOMORROW © 6-6-01 ... www.thismodernworld.com

Starving for Education

Families go on hunger strike to demand a new school

By Kari Lydersen

CHICAGO—Starting on Mother's Day, 17 members of the Little Village community, a Mexican neighborhood in southwest Chicago, drank only water and juice for 19 days. They camped out in unseasonably cold and rainy weather on a vacant strip of land across from a demolished cooking-oil factory.

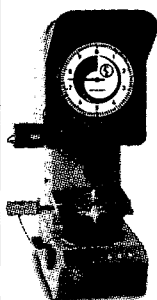
The group, mostly mothers, explained that while they were hungry,

their community has long been starving for decent secondary education. The only high school in the area, David G. Farragut High School, has 2,187 students, while more than 4,000 teen-agers live in the area. Not only do hundreds of students need to get up before dawn to take several buses to schools in other parts of the city, parents note, but Farragut is a career academy, meaning it teaches trades rather than preparing students for college. "They just assume our kids aren't going to college," says Teresa Yanec, one of the strikers.

In January 1998, after intense lobbying from Little Village parents, the Chicago Board of Education agreed to build three new schools in the city: two magnet schools—top academic schools, which serve 800 students from

around the city who gain entrance based on their test scores—and a high school in Little Village. Budget plans for 1999 and 2000 show \$30 million earmarked for the Little Village school. In 1999 the board acquired the land housing the old cooking oil factory at 31st and Kostner streets, and demolished the building. But last year, all progress stopped. Meanwhile, the two magnet schools, both located in wealthy areas on the north side of the city, were already open for classes.

When asked why the Little Village school is still a vacant lot, Chicago Public Schools CEO Paul Vallas said that money for the school had never been allocated by the state. Parents and local elected officials disputed this, however. They claimed the failure to build the school was another



Appall-o-Meter

By Dave Mulcahey

Black Bloc, the Game 3.3

Fresh outrage attends the release of a new video game called *State of Emergency*, due on the market in October from a company called Rockstar. Pop the game in your Sony PlayStation, and you and your droogs can roam the streets of a major city looking for stuff to smash and people to beat up.

State of Emergency isn't your typical slaughter vid, however. It's an "urban riot game set in the near future," reports the *Seattle Times*, "where the oppressive American Trade Organization (ATO) has declared a state of emergency." The player's job is "to smash up everything and everyone in order to destabilize the ATO." Sound familiar?

You get points by smashing yuppie boutique windows, throwing bricks, injuring bystanders and stomping on the lawmen in SWAT armor who defend the vile order. Worse, you are awarded for fomenting internecine battles between factions of protesters. (So if your grandpa was a member of the CP or SDS—and he can still work a joystick—don't expect to beat him.)

Barr the Door 6.9

Congressman Bob Barr, representative of suburban Atlanta, is a man not afraid to speak his mind. Sure, at times he's had trouble making deed conform to word, especially where the precious right of unborn life is concerned. But like many of his

Republican colleagues from the South, he will not back down where principle is at stake. Consider the stand he took at Atlanta's Hartsfield International Airport in late May, as reported on the Web site of WXIA, a local television station.

It seems Barr got angry when airport guards refused to let a shuttle van drive him to his car in a private parking lot. Barr got out of the van, flashed his congressional credentials and insisted that the vehicle be let in. The guards agreed to let the van in, but asked the driver to fill out a form for a temporary pass.

After a few minutes of waiting for the driver to complete the form, according to a complaint filed by security supervisor Alicia Gordon, Barr jumped out of the van again and shouted, "When are you going to open the damn gate, you stupid black idiot?"

When a guard tried to explain that the form had to be filled out, Barr continued, "Look you idiot little nigger, just open the motherfucking gate."

Barr admits to having a heated argument with security guards, but denies using foul language or racial epithets.

Stormy Weather 3.7

Considering all the things they've been falsely accused of through history, Jews might justifiably be sensitive to the name proposed for the ninth hurricane for this season: Hurricane Israel.

"With all our current security problems and the concurrent struggle over Israel's image in world opinion, a killer hurricane named Israel is the last thing we need," Efraim Zuroff, an Israeli official at the Simon Wiesenthal Center told the *Jerusalem Post*. "I shudder to think how terrible it would be in Muslim countries in the Far East if they found themselves suffering from a storm by that name."

Several Jewish and Israeli leaders have criticized the proposed name, but the committee of the U.N. World Meteorological Organization responsible for naming storms has refused to withdraw it. Some see a double standard. "How about Jesus?" commented Abraham Foxman, director of the Anti-Defamation League. "They wouldn't name a hurricane Jesus, would they? If there were a headline that said 'Jesus hits Philippines', a lot of people would be upset."



example of the needs of low-income, immigrant children being ignored. "The money was there, and it was used somewhere else," says Ricardo Munoz, the local alderman.

The hunger strikers vowed not to start eating until they received a written promise that the school would be built. On May 21, the parents disrupted a press conference by visiting California Gov. Gray Davis, causing him to cut his speech short. And on May 23, protesters were kicked out of a Board of Education meeting. The next day, Board President Gery Chico unexpectedly resigned. Meanwhile, as *In These Times* went to press, Vallas suddenly announced his resignation after heading the public school system for six years.

On May 30, a number of the strikers went to the state capitol in Springfield, as they had numerous times before, to lobby for money for the school. The next day, the state allocated \$148 million in additional funds for Chicago schools—\$48 million more than expected, according to Munoz. He attributed the extra money to the hunger strikers' efforts.

The group, 11 women and six men including two teen-agers, then ended their hunger strike. But they note that the battle for the school continues. Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley still has not promised that the funds will go directly to building the school.

Vallas scoffed at the community's charges of discrimination, noting that of the \$2.6 billion spent on school construction in the past six years, 86 percent of the students who benefited have been students of color. He also

pointed out that one of the new magnet schools, Walter Payton High School, has a large Latino enrollment.

Vallas maintained that there is still a question over whether an elementary school or high school should be built, and whether the 31st and Kostner site is the best one for a high school. The hunger strikers and their supporters say these are just more stalling tactics. "We remain more committed to this fight now than we were 19 days ago," says Carolina Perez, one of the strikers. "We have more force now than ever." ■



Protesters rally to support the hunger strike.

Granny B

Betty Krawczyk's journey from jail to the campaign trail

By Jeff Shaw

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA—No place fills 72-year-old Betty Krawczyk with more joy than the rugged shores of British Columbia's Clayoquot Sound, where her son built an A-frame house on 10 remote acres. She adores the wilderness here, though the house has no plumbing and she must gather water from a nearby brook. So what turned this great-grandmother into inmate number 03793924 at Burnaby Correctional Center for Women—and subsequently into a folk hero and Green Party candidate for British Columbia's legislature?

Simply put, it was the clear-cutting of old-growth trees on public lands by multinational corporations. Some of the ancient trees harvested in British Columbia exceed 1,000 years in age—and can fetch a six-figure price for logging companies. But the public sees almost none of the profits and is stuck with the bill for cleaning up the leveled tree stands.

Krawczyk's horror at the logging led her to join a road blockade organized by Friends of Clayoquot Sound in the mid-'90s, resulting in her first arrest. Last year a protest in the Elaho Valley sent her to jail again. Part of the Stoltmann Wilderness, a three-hour drive from Vancouver, the Elaho Valley is teeming with biodiversity and rife with ancient Douglas firs, hemlock, and red and yellow cedar. In a controversial move—allegedly to prevent clashes between loggers and environmentalists—a court order was issued prohibiting future peaceful protests in the valley.

Krawczyk defied the court order and blocked a logging road. She was arrested and sentenced in September 2000 to an unheard of year in prison. On principle, she refused to accept parole or electronic monitoring, nor would she sign any of the customary paperwork allowing her to be released on her own recognizance. Krawczyk says any of these actions would be tantamount to an admission of guilt. "My legal and moral stance has

always been that these forests belong to the people of British Columbia," Krawczyk says. "I have a right to be here, and I'm not signing any document that says I don't have a right to be here."

After a huge public outcry, a Canadian appeals court ordered Krawczyk to be released last January. In their ruling, Justices Ian Donald and Kenneth MacKenzie called the sentence "excessive," saying it seriously damaged public respect for the courts.

While in prison, Krawczyk decided to run for legislature on the ticket of British Columbia's growing Green Party, eschewing both of the province's established political parties, the New Democrats and the Liberals. The NDP, who identify themselves as allies of working people and the environment, were the ruling party going into the election—but had alienated a good portion of their traditional base of support through what many perceived as pro-corporate, anti-environment policies.

The Liberals exploited the loss of public confidence in the NDP. Despite the name, the Liberals are a party of passionate free-marketeers—more than one Green refers to them casually as "fascists"—who push tax cuts, logging and an anti-treaty agenda hostile to the First Nations, Canada's indigenous population. The New Democrats were harshly swept out of power in May in a landslide vote that saw the Liberals take 76 of 79 seats in the legislature.

Though they won no seats, the Greens scored more than 12 percent of the vote—tripling their showing in 1996, the province's last election. Green leader Adriane Carr credits Krawczyk for assisting the party in this year's momentum-building election. "People admire her for her integrity and her commitment," Carr says. "She brought a lot of energy to the party."

Krawczyk became familiar with NDP leader Ujjal Dosanjh before her jail term, offering to meet with him and discuss collaborating against the Liberals. She remembers writing to him, "I'd rather work with you than against you."

Dosanjh didn't reply to Krawczyk's repeated attempts to make contact, and

continued pushing policies contrary to the Green philosophy. Convinced that the NDP needed to hear what she had to say about halting old-growth logging, Krawczyk camped out in front of Dosanjh's office—until he ordered her removed and arrested.

Being a part of new political movements is nothing new for Krawczyk. In the United States, she was stirred into activism by the civil rights and women's movements. But it was the anti-war movement that most affected the Krawczyk family, forcing a move from

was almost entirely funded by those contributions. "The hardest part about prison, of course, is being separated from family," Krawczyk notes. "I have small grandchildren who are used to seeing me regularly."

Family is a recurring theme for the mother of eight. Her daughter Marian coordinates media and organized jail support for Krawczyk. "Mom is very much a matriarch," Marian says. "She's a nexus point for all the kids. I certainly wouldn't be [politically active] without my mother, and a lot of other



Betty Krawczyk with her daughter Marian at her Vancouver headquarters.

their home in Virginia to Canada so her sons could escape the draft. "It was very hard," she remembers. "I was leaving everything I knew."

Growing up in the lush forests of the South, Krawczyk was mortified watching them get logged and seeing the fertile wetlands of Louisiana drained. "When I came to British Columbia, I was just going to retire, but I saw the same thing happening here," she says. "It's one of the most beautiful places on earth, and to see it destroyed is just crazy."

Krawczyk's prison term proved that many agreed with her. More than 10,000 people sent letters to the premier of British Columbia demanding her release; 2,000 people wrote her personal letters, some from as far away as Europe, many bearing money. Her candidacy

people wouldn't be either."

Krawczyk sees her work as an example for the potential political power of senior citizens. "I'm demonstrating that elder people can make their presence felt in society in a political way," she says. "Elders are pushed aside in our culture. But the traditional role of elders is to be the moderators of society, to be stewards of the land. And I consider that my right as well as my responsibility."

With a Liberal government now in power, the logging of critical areas will almost certainly pick up speed. The government also is expected to challenge reproductive rights and the treaty rights of First Nations. "It's going to be all-out war," Krawczyk says. "I'll probably wind up back in prison. People have to do what they have to do to combat this." ■

WHAT THE MEDIA AREN'T TELLING YOU

About Dubya's Cabinet. In contrast to the kid-gloves treatment given by most of the mainstream media, *The Nation* reached some blunt conclusions in a series of informed investigations of George W. Bush's Cabinet appointees. Our take on the new Attorney General: "John Ashcroft is not just a conservative. He stands at the place where the Christian fanatics, antichoice, militiamen, gun nuts and white supremacists come together."

About the Secret History of Lead.

In an exhaustive special report, *The Nation* showed how General Motors, Standard Oil and Du Pont colluded to make and market gasoline containing lead—a deadly poison—although there were safe alternatives. Abetted by the US government, they suppressed scientific evidence that lead kills. Still sold in countries all over the world, leaded gasoline continues to poison the planet.

About Abortion Rights.

As columnist Katha Pollitt noted, the new threats to reproductive rights are frequently of the less-publicized variety, like localized legal attacks against abortion providers—an example being the recent trumped-up charges of extortion leveled against a Florida doctor. The message: "If the arsonists don't get you, litigation may

About the Battle in Seattle. "Seattle was indeed a milestone of a new kind of politics. Labor shed its nationalism for a new rhetoric of internationalism and solidarity.

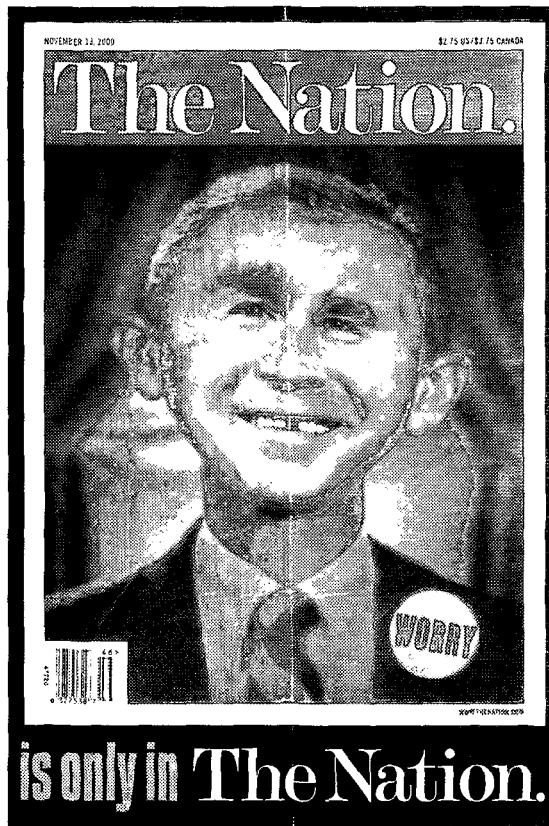
Progressives replaced their apologetic demeanor of the past twenty years with confidence, style and wit."

About Nuclear Weapons.

As our examination of the fine print hidden within our new President's emerging nuclear doctrine showed, "George W. Bush is taking advice from a group of unreformed initiates in the nuclear priesthood who are desperately seeking ways to relegitimize nuclear weapons."

About the FBI.

An intensive investigation for *The Nation* turned up everything from slovenly casework to massively skewed priorities. Example: Number of convictions for health and safety violations against employees in a single year: one. Number of telephone taps: 1.3 million.



is only in **The Nation.**

Want to know more? More than you'll ever learn from the corporate-owned major media? Covering everything from Washington and Wall Street to the latest books, films, culture and art? Subscribe to America's oldest, nosiest, most independent weekly journal of fact and opinion.

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER OF \$50 OFF THE SINGLE-COPY RATE



PLEASE SEND

ME 24 ISSUES OF **THE NATION** AT THE SPECIAL LOW RATE OF JUST \$15.97—\$50 OFF THE REGULAR NEWSSTAND RATE:

☐ PAYMENT ENCLOSED ☐ BILL ME
☐ BILL MY: ☐ VISA ☐ MASTERCARD ☐ AMEX

CARD# _____ EXP. _____

SIGNATURE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

E-MAIL _____

MAIL TO: **THE NATION**, P.O. BOX 55149, BOULDER, CO 80322-5149, OR

CALL TOLL FREE 1-800-333-8536

OR GO TO WWW.THENATION.COM

Fishy Business

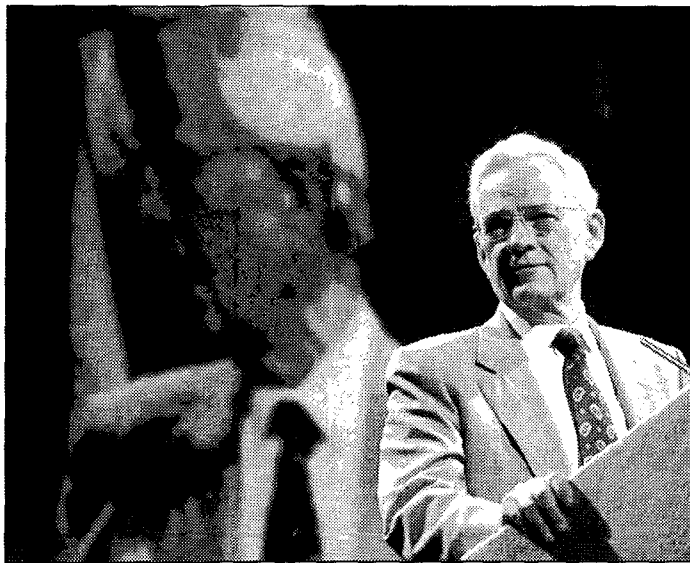
The aluminum industry exploits the energy crisis, gouges consumers and threatens endangered salmon

By Jeffrey St. Clair

Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill is an unlikely apostle for the crusade to combat global warming. But for the past couple of years, the former corporate executive has been preaching the virtues of moving away from fossil fuels. In 1998, while head of aluminum giant Alcoa, O'Neill gave a speech to the aluminum industry's trade association in which he named what he believed to be the world's two most pressing problems. "One is nuclear holocaust," he said. "The second is environmental: specifically, the issue of global climate change and the potential of global warming." O'Neill handed out copies of this speech at George W. Bush's first cabinet meeting.

O'Neill is not an altruistic green: For more than a decade he ran one of the world's most rapacious timber giants, International Paper. However, he is a financial opportunist. While at Alcoa, O'Neill correctly calculated that new clean-air rules could help aluminum makers, which stood to reap higher profits if Detroit were forced to switch to lighter-weight cars made with more aluminum. More deviously, O'Neill also foresaw a way to make a killing by getting Alcoa in on the front-end of the new energy market. And in the process, he made himself a bundle of money.

Aluminum companies are the biggest energy hogs in the Pacific Northwest. The industry was lured to the Columbia River basin during the manufacturing frenzy of World War II, when the federal government gave aluminum companies cheap power in return for a commitment to arms manufacturing. But the aluminum industry is incredibly inefficient. Even at current market rates, the Northwest Energy Coalition estimates that it takes anywhere from \$2 to \$5 worth of electricity to produce a single pound of aluminum, which then sells for only 70 cents.



GEORGE F. LEE/AFP

Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill has made a killing.

power rates in the country. But the cheap power isn't shared equally. The biggest power gluttons, namely the aluminum smelters, get the lowest rates.

But even the low rates weren't enough. In 1996, the aluminum companies convinced the Clinton administration to give them so-called "remarketing rights" that would allow them to purchase subsidized power from the BPA, then resell the power at market rates. Because of these changes in contracts, the big companies were primed to cash in on California's misery. When energy prices surged in May 2000, and California felt its first power crunch in decades, utilities scrambled to find new power at nearly any price. "Oregonians always feared that Californians would come for our water," says Larry Tuttle, director of the Portland-based Citizens for Environmental Equity. "But few realized that the first raid would be on water-power."

During the Clinton years, the big aluminum companies negotiated new contracts with the BPA, allowing them to sell excess power on the western electric grid at market prices. And although the logic of giving these companies preferential rates was to provide good-paying jobs in rural areas of the Northwest, there was no requirement that the companies actually use the power to keep their plants open.

Thus, the aluminum companies promptly idled their plants, sent thousands of workers home, and sold their subsidized power to California to capitalize on the skyrocketing rates. The profits are staggering. The aluminum companies have taken power that they bought from the BPA for about \$25 per megawatt hour and sold it on the wholesale market for between \$200 and \$1,000 per megawatt hour. This year alone, Alcoa has made more than \$210 million on BPA-subsidized "load curtailments" designed to redirect power to California. And it stands to make another \$39 million this summer.

After being tapped as treasury secretary, O'Neill chose not to immediately divest himself of \$100 million in share and stock options in Alcoa. When asked if this presented a conflict of interest, O'Neill told *Meet the Press*: "The ethics department lawyers said they thought it was OK for me to maintain these shares. You know, I can't imagine that, as treasury secretary, I'm going to have decisions come before me that have anything to do with this."

Ethical questions aside, it was a shrewd business move. Alcoa's first quarter earnings for 2001 were a company record of \$404 million—and \$57 million more than last year. Since most of the company's plants had been idled, much of the windfall can be attributed to the remarketing of its federal power. Alcoa's stock rose by more than 7 percent during the same period, meaning that O'Neill's bankroll increased by \$6 million.

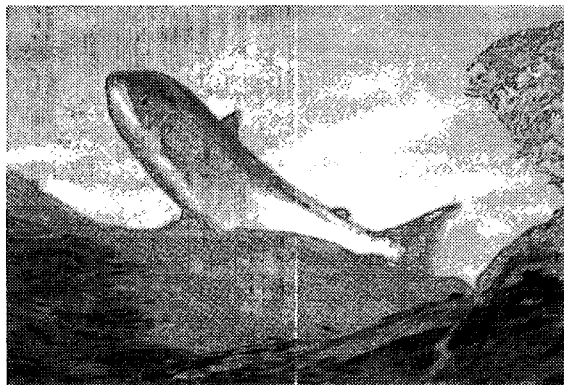
Alcoa's far from alone. According to a report by the Northwest congressional delegation, which analyzed data supplied by the BPA, the aluminum companies Kaiser, Goldendale Northwest and Columbia Falls—all with smelters in the Northwest—have profited the most from the resale of BPA power: Kaiser netted \$426 million; Goldendale Northwest, \$344 million; and Columbia Falls, \$292 million. Altogether these so-called Direct Service Industries have reaped approximately \$1.7 billion off these remarketed power deals.

The prolonged drought in the Northwest has only compounded the power problems. For much of this year, Los Angeles has received more rainfall than Seattle. Portland is 12 inches short of its normal rainfall level and counting. The snowpack in the Northwest, which feeds the Columbia River

system, is just shy of the all-time low in 1977. Run-off levels are also the second lowest in 72 years, and stream flows are the third worst ever. The situation is dire. "We are becoming increasingly concerned that this may not just be a problem for this summer," says Steve Wright, acting administrator for the BPA. Canadian reservoirs, which store half the Columbia

River system's water, are extremely low this year, which means we could start next year with less than a full tank."

Short of power because of the drought, the BPA has been forced to go back to those same companies and buy back at astronomical rates the power it just sold them. As a result, the agency is now facing bankruptcy. While the big corporations and executives, such as O'Neill, are making a killing, residential consumers are faced with black-outs, ruined salmon streams and the prospect of rate increases between 50 to 250 percent over current costs. There's a direct relationship: According to Oregon Democratic Rep. Peter DeFazio, for every 100 megawatts of power the BPA has to purchase to service the big aluminum companies, rates for other Northwest consumers will increase by 10 percent.



INSTEAD OF BREACHING THE DAMS, THE ALUMINUM INDUSTRY WANTS TO TAKE THE SALMON TO THE PACIFIC ON BARGES OR IN TRUCKS.



The timing of all this couldn't be worse for the salmon stocks that once ran the Columbia watershed in numbers seen nowhere else on earth, but now teeter at the edge of extinction. The eight hydropower dams on the lower Snake and Columbia rivers block passage to spawning grounds for migratory salmon. Environmentalists, Indian tribes and most fish biologists believe that for the salmon to survive many of these dams will have to come down.

But the Clinton administration decided not to anger the aluminum industry and instead opted for an "aggressive nonbreach strategy." The cornerstone of this approach was a plan to require the dam operators to increase the flow of water through the spillways, hoping to flush juvenile salmon safely downstream. The dams are bound by court orders and a salmon recovery plan to provide enough spillwater to flush migrating salmon downstream. But in April, the Bush administration declared a power emergency, enabling the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which operates the dams, to override the salmon-recovery plan and send all of the water

into hydroturbines, which slice and dice the salmon like a giant cuisinart.

How bad is it? At the turn of the century, more than 16 million salmon and steelhead spawned in the Columbia River system. Today, they number fewer than a million, and more than 90 percent of those are hatchery-bred fish. The wild salmon is nearly extinct. The number of Snake River chinook, an endangered species, heading toward the ocean this year was the third lowest on record. The National Marine Fisheries Service estimates that the salmon death toll will climb by 13.3 percent because of the lack of flows—that's more than 130,000 fish. If the summer is as hot and dry as some forecasts predict, the death count could double.

Instead of providing flows the fish need to survive, which most fish biologists conclude will ultimately require the breaching of several dams, the aluminum industry and the BPA want to collect the fish in the upper basin, put them into barges or big trucks, and transport them past the dams. One study estimates that 85 percent of the Snake River salmon will conduct their journey to the Pacific mostly on barges. But the barged salmon fare worse than the ones that face decimation in the giant hydroturbines. "This is no way to recover salmon," says Ted Koch, a federal fish biologist in Boise, Idaho. "We are lying to ourselves if we think that we are recovering salmon stocks and meeting power needs, too."

Other federal fish biologists concur that the BPA's power-generating schemes will doom the world's most prolific salmon river. "What's happening makes me extremely nervous," says Howard Schaller, a salmon expert with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "It makes me think that this region doesn't have the will to do what it needs to recover these fish."

The aluminum companies say they have given the BPA millions of dollars a year to mitigate the damage their operations do to salmon and steelhead. But much of that money simply goes to hatcheries, not to save wild fish or their habitat. And, according to documents unearthed by environmental economist Karyn Moscovitz, the BPA spends more than \$4.4 million every year on the Columbia Basin Law Enforcement Program, a four-state police force that patrols the Columbia and Snake rivers, largely harassing Indians trying to assert their salmon-fishing rights. The \$4.4 million pays for about 35 full-time officers and deluxe state-of-the-art equipment, including airplanes, radar equipment, guns, numerous vehicles and horses. "In 1995, the force made 1,484 arrests, but tracked down only 139 illegally caught salmon," Moscovitz says. "At a total of \$3.6 million, the BPA pays nearly \$26,000 a fish for this program."

DeFazio is pushing a plan that could aid both the salmon and Northwest power consumers. He argues that the BPA should be forced to sever its contracts with the aluminum companies and reroute that power to residential consumers and provide fish. He pins much of the blame for the current crisis on the 1992 Energy Act, a federal deregulation bill that allowed for the freewheeling marketing of federally generated power. DeFazio, one of 60 house members to vote against the deregulation bill, has introduced legislation to re-regulate the energy industry. "These have been dark days for Californians, but an extremely profitable time for a few giant power marketers," DeFazio says. "Congress made a colossal mistake in allowing the deregulation of wholesale production and distribution of energy. We need to return to a regulated energy market with stable, reliable, cost-based power." ■

The Class War's Next Attack?

The tax cut is just the beginning

By Geov Parrish

Cameras clicked away on June 7 as George W. Bush signed into law one of history's largest tax cut measures, shoveling an astonishing percentage of its benefits into the pockets of the country's wealthiest taxpayers. Despite four months of bleating from the left side of the aisle, the tax cuts faced only token congressional opposition—almost all of it focusing on the size of the cuts, not their economic structure. Congressional Republicans guided the plan through a docile Senate and worked out a compromise with the House version of the bill, which

passed in a matter of days. While the networks focused on the "drama" of Bush's self-imposed deadline for cementing the deal, Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill was quietly sketching out what he hopes will be the next set of radical economic victories.

In an interview published on May 18 in London's *Financial Times*, O'Neill laid out in some detail his desire, among other things, to privatize and rework Social Security and Medicare; to eliminate the capital gains tax on businesses; and, most strikingly, to abolish the corporate income

tax. As the *Financial Times* put it: "Mr O'Neill ... says he 'absolutely' wants to eliminate corporate income tax. He also wants to do away with capital gains taxes on businesses, and indicated the administration was prepared to put this on a shorter-term agenda. ... The fact that one of the most senior cabinet members would lay out such a detailed and radical programme is a sign that the administration has not been deterred by opposition to its initial tax-cut plan." In the article, O'Neill implied that Bush himself was "intrigued" with the ideas.

Before O'Neill joined the Bush administration, he was chairman of Alcoa. But like his friend Dick Cheney, the bulk of O'Neill's career—dating back to his days as a deputy director of the Office of Management and Budget under Gerald Ford—has been spent as a Washington insider. Generally considered a moderate Republican, O'Neill cited his philosophical desire to abolish the corporate income tax during his confirmation hearings in January; he was then confirmed with overwhelming bipartisan support. A philosophic preference by a nominee, however, is not the same as a plan advocated by a senior cabinet member. His comments to a foreign newspaper were the first time a ranking Bushite has laid out abolition of the corporate income tax as a specific policy goal.

In his interview, O'Neill acknowledged that abolishing the tax would probably mean both lower government spending and higher personal income tax rates. The corporate income tax now accounts for about 10 percent of the federal budget. According to Chuck Collins of Boston's United for a Fair Economy, that's down from a peak of about 33 percent in the mid-'50s. "It's part of a long-term strategy of shifting the tax burden," Collins says. "It's a shift of the burden from corporations to individuals, from the rich to the poor, from big business to small business. It's an overall trend toward regressivity."

While tax cuts for wealthy individuals, such as efforts to rip away at the capital gains tax, have been visible and often contested, the tax code changes that have reduced corporate taxpaying have been quiet, bipartisan affairs. Perhaps the most important came late in the Reagan era: the Tax Reform Act of 1986. It popularized the "S Corporation," a vehicle by which corporations could channel profits directly to individuals, avoiding corporate tax rates and enabling the individuals to pay lower rates and use deductions unavailable to companies.

Bob McIntyre, director of the Washington-based Citizens for Tax Justice, says O'Neill's idea is going nowhere. "He's just talking through his hat," McIntyre scoffs. "I don't know what his motivation is, other than he shoots from the hip con-

stantly." McIntyre is dismissive because of the difficulty of attributing corporate income to individuals, when ownership (the shareholders) continually changes.

But O'Neill skirts the problem by simply proposing that that income not be taxed at all. "I think there is a conservative ideology that says, 'let's tax income at the point of transfer,'" says Collins. "Corporations as entities have responsibilities, and [like individuals] benefit from each transfer. They don't seem to have any compunction about receiving subsidies and corporate welfare."

O'Neill, like many conservatives, argues that the corporate income tax is really a personal tax, as corporations simply pass along the cost to consumers. This is only partly true. Companies such as Microsoft, military contractors or pharmaceutical giants price their products not based on overhead and production costs, but on how much the market will bear. The chances that retail prices will drop if corporations no longer pay income taxes are slim to none.

O'Neill's comments reveal the full extent to which the Bush radicals want to rewrite the rules. But the U.S. media almost completely

ignored the *Financial Times* interview. Only the *Washington Post* carried an account devoted to the London story two days later. The foreign interview seemed designed to alert financial and political players, while keeping the public in the dark. Neither the *Financial Times* nor the *Post* challenged O'Neill's rosy arguments that his desired reforms would "promote economic growth" and "improve U.S. global competitiveness." Nor did either outlet mention the likely exacerbating effect on America's record income gap between rich and poor.

Is abolishing the corporate income tax just a wild O'Neill pipe dream? Perhaps. But the odds that such sweeping reforms could become law—even with the Democrats now controlling the Senate—are far better than they seemed in January, when the Senate gave O'Neill's visions a nice pat on the head at his confirmation hearing. Since then, a stunningly regressive tax plan has been signed into law with the approval of 46 Senate Republicans (including subsequent turncoat Jim Jeffords) and 12 Democrats.

Could another radical plan—to privatize Social Security, revamp Medicare or abolish the corporate income tax—win approval? It seems almost certain that the Bush White House will propose still more regressive reforms. And many Democrats are happy to go along with the program—making the wealthy much, much wealthier, at the expense of everyone else. ■

IS ABOLISHING THE CORPORATE INCOME TAX JUST A WILD PIPE DREAM? PERHAPS. BUT PAUL O'NEILL'S COMMENTS REVEAL THE FULL EXTENT TO WHICH THE BUSH RADICALS WANT TO REWRITE THE RULES TO FAVOR CORPORATIONS.

The Sounds of Silence

By G. Pascal Zachary

CHOEUNG EK, CAMBODIA

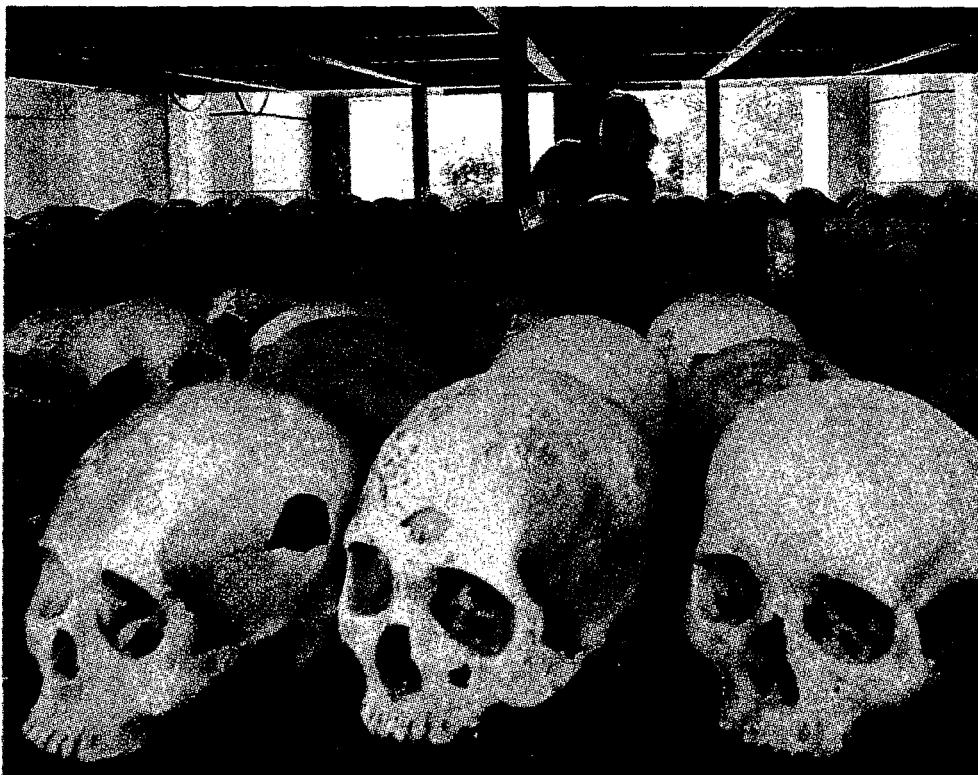
The road to the Killing Fields is narrow and pot-holed. But on a recent steamy Sunday afternoon it is deserted, so the drive goes quickly from the capital, Phnom Penh, about 10 miles to the southeast. The temperature exceeds 100 degrees, so the fields, which sit on a plateau some 40 feet above an adjacent rice paddy, seem cooler than the land below.

For a time the fields are empty, save for a few children who beg for money and a woman selling drinks. Then a Korean tourist arrives, followed by a group of young Buddhist monks, heads shaved and orange gowns swaying as they move from one open grave site to another.

The monks are praying over the grave, but they are among the few in Cambodia who publicly mourn the victims of the genocide that engulfed this country from 1975 to 1979, when an estimated 1.5 million Cambodians died from starvation, disease and murder at the hands of the notorious Khmer Rouge.

At the Killing Fields, there is no museum, only an open-air exhibit with three poster-size descriptions of this death camp, which was the final destination for prisoners detained and tortured in Pol Pot's Security Prison 21. More than 17,000 people are believed to have been executed in these fields, and the remains of half of them have been dug up. In the lone memorial on the site—a narrow pillar rising above the center of the fields—hundreds of skulls are visible, an odd testament to the dead.

The skulls are piled high in a narrow, glass-enclosed case, but at the base there is an opening so that a visitor can handle the skulls or even carry one off. This casual, almost frivolous presentation of the remains does not go unnoticed. Indeed, the skulls merit more debate among Cambodians than do the acts of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. Buddhists prefer to burn their dead, and certainly don't wish to display the bones of loved ones, so the memorial raises the ire of many. The government recently promised to review the situation, holding open the possibility that the skulls will be properly disposed of and the memorial made more dignified.



ROB ELLIOTT/AFP

The skulls have merited more debate than the acts of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge.

That the skulls of the Killing Fields draw more discussion than meting out a rough justice to the Khmer Rouge killers highlights Cambodia's predicament. The country's prime minister, Hun Sen, is a former Khmer Rouge commander who switched sides in the late '70s, when Vietnam turned its neighbor into a client state. In 1998, Hun Sen claimed victory in national elections, in a plebiscite that validated his coup a year earlier. The United Nations, which is the largest donor to this impoverished country of about 10 million people, has insisted for years that Cambodia hold war crimes trials. Though Pol Pot is dead, a few senior people in his government are still alive, as are thousands of the Khmer Rouge's rank and file, some of whom only laid down their arms in the past few years.

The United Nations has given Hun Sen's government broad influence over these trials, though it wants some of the judges to come from other countries. Afraid of being judged by outsiders and facing the prospect of igniting a national debate over who did what to whom during the Pol Pot years, Hun Sen has refused to launch the tribunal. What looks like foot-dragging to the international community is considered by Cambodia's elite to be rational caution. "The trials will occur, in time, but the details are too important to get wrong," says Om Yenteng, one of Hun Sen's advisers.

The same frustrating caution can be seen wherever matters of human rights arise in Cambodian life. Even victims of the Khmer Rouge—practically the entire Cambodian population over the age of 30—remain silent. One recent evening two married couples dine in a seafood restaurant across the road from the Mekong River, which cuts through Phnom Penh. The night air is refreshing, and talk turns to their childhood when each was forcibly removed from their homes by Pol Pot's soldiers. Sent to an unfamiliar rural area, they were compelled to scratch out a meager living from the land, always fearing that they would be killed after dark for some insane crime like speaking a few words of English or admitting that one had worked as a teacher.

Today these four people each work for a foreign aid agency, earning good salaries and enjoying the fragile peace. One of the two women, who is studying for a master's degree and works full time, recalls that once, during a morning walk in the Pol Pot years, she found a stack of children's bodies, all dead. She hurried back to her family's camp and reported what she had found. Her parents' reaction still disappoints her. "Don't say anything," they told her. "Be quiet."

These words are a metaphor for contemporary Cambodia, a society that tried too hard to ignore its past. Now herself a mother of two, this woman perhaps still carries the guilt of doing nothing, of saying nothing to protect herself. Writ large, Cambodia is a silent country, bereft of grief or reconciliation. Forget about justice or settling scores. These four Cambodians, and countless more who harbor grievous memories of a national bloodletting, have not the opportunity, or even the fearlessness, to merely stand and speak about what happened around them. "That will take another generation," says Kassie Neou, director of the Cambodian Institute of Human Rights.

Because the Cambodians are still silent about their national shame, the commitment to a culture of rights and obligations remains weak here. Bribery is rampant. The army, still the most powerful institution in the country, dominates an array of cash businesses from logging to prostitution to drug smuggling. And political violence continues.

A U.N. report, issued earlier this year, cited three murders last year of



Hun Sen

political activists. The United Nations also has found widespread evidence of torture by Cambodian police, reporting that 19 percent of prisoners claim to have been tortured in police custody and 2 percent claim to have been abused in prison. Often victims are too afraid to file complaints, and those who do complain suffer intimidation.

In such a climate, elections can make a mockery of democracy. Under pressure from aid donors, Hun Sen agreed to hold local elections next year. This will be a national balloting, along party lines, for what in U.S. terms are county offices. Neou, a senior member of the national election commission, fears widespread violence as Hun Sen's ruling party seeks to shore up its legitimacy.

Questions about Hun Sen's past as a Vietnamese puppet in the '80s, and his earlier support for Pol Pot, stops the United States from giving direct aid to the Cambodian government. Neou, whose own nonprofit group receives money indirectly from the U.S.

Congress, understands the concerns of the American government. Hun Sen is no democrat. Yet Neou complains that the United States can do more. "When I say the U.S. should fully engage, I don't mean it should give a blank check to a corrupt group," he says, referring to Hun Sen and his cronies.

Tortured by the Khmer Rouge (his crime was knowing how to speak English) and harassed by Hun Sen (his girlfriend was murdered in the 1998 campaign), Neou thinks the United States has a continuing debt to Cambodian reformers if only because of the American decision to widen the Vietnam War to include his country. Nixon's secret bombing and a U.S. invasion further destabilized a Cambodia already under pressure from Vietnamese Communists, setting the stage for the Communist victory in Vietnam, and for the Khmer Rouge seizure of Cambodia in 1975. "We hoped the Americans would protect us and they ran away," Neou says.

Now the Cambodians are a people arguing not over how to hold a kind of national day of reckoning, but what to do with the sun-bleached skulls of the dead. Even this debate concerns only the elite, however. On the recent broiling Sunday, as the Buddhist monks pray in the Killing Fields, a woman clears brush with her machete in the rice paddy below, singing in a sweet voice that can be heard far in the distance. ■

G. Pascal Zachary lives in London and is the author of *The Global Me: New Cosmopolitans and the Competitive Edge*.

Writ large,
Cambodia is a
silent country,
bereft of grief or
reconciliation.
Forget about
justice or
settling scores.

VIOLENT REACTION

What do teen killers have in common?

By ANTHONY CHASE

I recall the feelings of hatred and fantasies of revenge I harbored as a teen-ager in the rural Hudson River Valley, where certain classmates tormented me because they thought I was gay. The arrival of my adolescence was urgently convincing me that when bullies called me a faggot, they were right. My good grades, the leads I got in school plays, and the encouragement I received for artistic ability could not compensate for the fear I felt as my sexuality became more and more real.

Those memories return to me each time I hear that yet another teen-age boy has taken a gun into a high school and opened fire, leaving his community terrorized and bewildered. I do not feel bewildered. The memory of my own revenge fantasies, Bosch-like in their terror, return to me vividly, even now, 30 years after my days at Van Wyck Junior High School.

Needless to say, when I heard on April 20, 1999, that Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, two students at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, had gone on a shooting spree, killing 13 people and wounding 23, I was stunned. But my shock was underscored by a disquieting sense of recognition. I immediately wondered if Harris and Klebold were gay. Nowhere in the early reporting was the possibility even mentioned.

Not since Clarence Darrow defended Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, who gratuitously killed 14-year-old Bobby Franks for a thrill in 1924, has there been a case of murder by a pair of adolescent boys so bizarre and intriguing to the nation as the massacre at Columbine High. All the boys came from lives of privilege and saw themselves as outsiders, superior in significant ways. Like Leopold and Loeb, Harris and Klebold were said to have a unique and dangerous chemistry between them; they would never have done alone what they did together. Both pairs had a relationship in which one was dominant—Loeb and Harris—and the other passive. Still, in both cases, the boys were clearly full partners in the assault. Among other details, forensic evidence confirms that Harris and Klebold were responsible for a nearly equal number of murders.

Videotapes made by Harris and Klebold reveal that they were very concerned about hurting their parents with what they were about to do, especially Klebold. (Leopold and Loeb were similarly concerned about their families' reactions, especially Leopold). And it is fascinating that although he made the famous tell-all videotape, Klebold still took time to erase his computer's hard drive immediately before the assault on Columbine. Leaving nothing to chance, the technologically sophisticated boy obliterated all traces of these files. In view of everything he told on the tape, what could he have been trying so meticulously to hide?

Though the boys left an extensive record of their thoughts and plans, the personal details of their friendship remain a mystery. Unlike Leopold and Loeb, Harris and Klebold did not survive their crime. The extensive details of the Leopold and Loeb relationship, wherein Loeb consented to sexual activity with Leopold in exchange for partnership in increasingly violent crimes, are not to be found in the Harris and Klebold story.

Gradually, however, in the days and weeks following the shootings, some details about what had motivated Harris and Klebold began to emerge. Depending upon who you were, it seems, Columbine High School could be an oppressive place. It was not until August 1999, fully four months after the Columbine attack, that Dave Cullen of *Salon* reported: "Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold had endured repeated harassment due to rumors they were gay. Jocks especially taunted the pair with epithets like 'faggot' and 'homo.'"

I read the phrase over and over and over and began to wonder about other boys at other schools. The details were surprisingly easy to find:

- On February 2, 1996, 14-year-old Barry Loukaitis killed a teacher and two students at Frontier Junior High School in Moses Lake, Washington. He had been taunted by school jocks who said he was a "faggot."

- On October 1, 1997, 16-year-old Luke Woodham killed two students and wounded seven others at Pearl High School in Pearl, Mississippi. He had often been called "gay" by classmates.

- On December 1, 1997, 14-year-old Michael Carneal killed three students and wounded five others at Heath High School in West Paducah, Kentucky. He had actually been called "gay" in the school newspaper. His mother was distressed at the lack of concern among school authorities when she complained.

- The pattern has held in the attacks subsequent to Columbine as well. In March of this year, after continuous torment by school mates, 15-year-old Charles "Andy" Williams, a boy reportedly preoccupied with Harris and Klebold, opened fire at Santana High School in Santee, California, shooting 15 students and adults and killing two. He had been derided by classmates for being a "skinny faggot."

After the massacre at Columbine High, the Littleton community and the media all but ignored any motivations for the crime, easily dismissing the killers as "monsters" in need of no explanation, and focusing almost exclusively on the survivors. The possibility that a culture of intolerance in idyllic

Littleton might have contributed to the tensions at Columbine was quickly countered by stories of how Christian faith had helped heal the community. The eagerness to promote this view even extended to out-and-out distortion.

Nearly everyone knows the story of Cassie Bernall. While pointing a gun at her head, Klebold supposedly asked Bernall if she believed in God, and the girl bravely answered, "Yes." She was summarily shot, becoming a martyr. Bolstered by details that Bernall was formerly a troubled teen who had threatened to kill her own parents, the story was recounted in the best-selling book *She Said Yes: The Unlikely Martyrdom of Cassie Bernall* written by her mother, Misty.

Only it never happened. Emily Wyant, the only surviving witness to Bernall's murder, was with Bernall, looking into her eyes when Klebold slammed his hand on the table under which they were hiding, said, "Peekaboo," and without exchanging a word, shot the girl. Bernall's murder was tragic, yes, but not the inspirational pro-Christian martyrdom that it was to become. Yet Right-wing fundamentalist groups have used the story to recruit teen-agers into Christian youth groups from coast to coast. The *Rocky Mountain News* continued to run stories promoting *She Said Yes* as a factual account for five months after they learned it was fictitious, stopping only after Cullen reported the true story.

Right-wing leaders were quick to light on the possibility that the Columbine killers were gay, with little or no prompting. The Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas sent out a media alert saying, "Two filthy fags slaughtered 13 people at Columbine High"; the Rev. Jerry Falwell described Klebold and Harris as gay on *Geraldo Live*.

With rumors circulating that the two boys were gay, the Denver gay community has been reluctant to speak up. Their dilemma is obvious. If the killers were gay, and tormented for it, that proves homophobia is destructive. On the other hand, depicting the killers sympathetically could lead to a backlash against the gay community. Gay people are disarmed, unable to stand up for the murderers, even though doing so might prevent future murders. The right, meanwhile, can point to the killings in a way that could encourage further repression and abuse of gay teens.

There are those who seem to be saying that if a kid eventually turns violent, it proves that he deserved any bullying he may have suffered. Many argue that all teen-agers get called "gay" and "faggot," that the words are as common as

hello or good-bye. But persistent, focused torment of an individual because the epithet is perceived to be true is another matter entirely.

Persecution of gay high school students, and students perceived to be gay, is endemic. A 1998 survey of 58 high schools conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Education

revealed that 22 percent of gay respondents had skipped school in the past month because they felt unsafe there. Thirty-one percent had been threatened or injured at school sometime during the previous 12 months. A recent study in Iowa indicated that the average high school student in Des Moines hears about 25 anti-gay remarks each day. And in June, Human Rights Watch released a 203-page report, which suggests that gay teen-agers in U.S. schools are often subjected to such intense bullying that they are unable to receive an adequate education. The report says that the problem affects as many as 2 million school-age youth nationwide.

Still schools typically act as if this phenomenon does not exist. Human Rights Watch reports that school officials usually ignore such harassment, that tormentors are often not held accountable, and that, in some cases, school officials

have even encouraged or participated in the abuse. Beth Reis, a principal researcher of a study of school-related anti-gay violence in Washington State, observed that harassment, if not ignored, is typically dismissed as "teasing." Sometimes the victims are advised that if they insist upon being openly gay, they have to expect such treatment. Joyce Stanton Mitchell reports in *College Board Review* that a survey of the nation's 42 largest school districts indicates that 76 percent do not provide teacher training on issues facing gay students. Indeed, teachers ignore instances of anti-gay harassment 97 percent of the time.

Human Rights Watch also documents instances of physical violence against gay teens. Such occurrences are routinely reported, but seldom pulled together in a way that would reveal a pattern. For instance, California teen-agers lobbying for a bill specifically banning discrimination against gay students, sponsored by state Rep. Sheila Kuehl (D-Santa Monica), reported being spat upon and beaten. In 1999, Jonathan Shapiro, 18, and Matthew Rogers, 20, reportedly used a pocket knife to cut the word "HOMO" into the back of a 17-year-old junior at Northfield Mount Hermon School, a private school in Massachusetts, because the boy liked the



IF THE KILLERS WERE GAY, AND TORMENTED FOR IT, THAT PROVES HOMOPHOBIA IS DESTRUCTIVE. ON THE OTHER HAND, DEPICTING THE KILLERS SYMPATHETICALLY COULD LEAD TO A BACKLASH AGAINST THE GAY COMMUNITY.

British rock band Queen, whose lead singer Freddie Mercury died of AIDS complications in 1991. "Rogers called it a gay band," said local Police Chief David Hastings.

Reis' study of anti-gay violence in Washington State, which was conducted by a group of public and private agencies called the Safe Schools Coalition, chronicled eight anti-gay motivated gang rapes on boys and girls. In one case, a school cheerleader reported being forced to watch while a lesbian friend who had kissed her at the prom was raped and urinated upon by the cheerleader's boyfriend and his friends. The attack allegedly occurred in a storage building on school grounds, but was never reported to school authorities.

The increase in campus gay-baiting is happening at the same time as an increase in the number of gay student support groups, such as Gay-Straight Alliances (in which gay kids can find support while still being ambiguous about whether they are gay or merely sympathetic), and an increase in lawsuits pursued by those who have been victimized. The shootings at Columbine High School have directly and universally altered the landscape of these events.

In December 1999, for instance, the *Boston Herald* reported that a Sandwich, Massachusetts high school student, who had been expelled for making death threats just days after the Columbine High shootings, filed a \$75 million lawsuit, claiming that his classmates had made school "a living hell" for him and that school officials had done nothing about it. "The boy, who was 16 at the time," reported the *Herald*, "snapped after 18 months of jeers and taunts from kids who called him fat and gay." Whether the boy is gay or not, in the "don't ask, don't tell" world of teen-agers, he understandably claims not to be.

The "Littleton" connection was made in March 2000 in Toronto, when it was reported that an eighth-grade student had been arrested for allegedly making a "kill list" with the names of five schoolmates on it. Police came to the school and arrested the teen, charging him with five counts of threatening others. He was suspended from school indefinitely and forbidden to go near the five male students named on his list. The immediate response of the school principal was to assert, "our response is to take it seriously and follow up."

The list, however, was not unmotivated. According to the *Toronto Star*, the 14-year-old boy's classmates said that he "had been the target of teasing, with some kids calling him 'gay.'" Toronto District School Board chairwoman Gail Nyberg told *In These Times* that the bullies were reprimanded and sent to counselors. Nyberg, however, has battled conservative groups over her efforts to ban anti-gay language from the Toronto schools. "Opponents have argued," Nyberg says, "that if we protect gay teens now, in a year we'll be writing laws protecting those who 'wear glasses or have pimples.'"

And in Washington State, Gov. Gary Locke and some of his fellow Democrats have been scrambling to resurrect a measure intended to stop bullying in public schools. The bill was derailed after the Washington chapter of the Christian Coalition denounced it as a gay rights measure, arguing that the legislation denied Christians the right to vocalize their abhorrence of homosexuality.

Is it any wonder, given the realities of society's attitudes toward gay people, that gay teens are generally invisible, as opposed to their notoriously demonstrative heterosexual peers? Yet clues to their existence abound.

Look at the nation's youth suicide rate. Gay males account for more than half of male youth suicide. A pivotal 1978 study by Alan P. Bell and Martins Weinberg of Indiana University first indicated a suicide rate among homosexual males 14 times

higher than that of their heterosexual peers. Study after study confirms this result. A recent study of 750 males ages 18 to 27 years in Calgary, Alberta revealed that homosexual males comprised 62.5 percent of suicide attempters.

Here in Buffalo, I read recently about a boy from a local Catholic high school, an excellent student, star of school musicals and the well-loved son of an affluent family. The accompanying photo showed a handsome blond youth with a sparkling smile. The story was about his suicide. My antennae went up. I knew his drama teacher and called her. "Why?" I asked, and she responded, "We all think he was gay."

The whole notion that gay teen-agers exist disturbs some people. Gay teens themselves are not immune to societal hate and repulsion of homosexuality. This is specially true for those growing up in intolerant environments. Some direct that hatred inward. As a society we apparently are more comfortable with gay teen suicide than we are with gay teens. How different the attitude becomes when such hatred and repulsion is not directed inward.

In 1999, at the time of the shootings, Columbine High School had no services geared toward gay youth and had never had an openly gay student. Aricia La France, a Mennonite youth worker in Littleton, says that one lesbian student told her she had been in class with Klebold when he protested to the teacher that another student had called him a "fag," and the teacher replied, "But you are, aren't you?"

This story may be apocryphal. But interviews with Columbine students indicate that the possible homosexuality of Klebold and Harris is used to confirm that they were freaks or monsters—not to open the dialogue on tolerance and diversity. The implication is that the abuse the pair suffered in life is justified by the deed they finally committed.

Continued on page 27



Teen killers Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb with their attorney Clarence Darrow in 1924. Previous page: Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold caught on video surveillance cameras at Columbine High.

AIDS STRIKES BACK

By HANS JOHNSON

The report is as stunning as it is sobering. HIV infection rates among young gay men in the United States are rising. One in seven young gay men acknowledge carrying HIV, and for gay black men in their twenties, one in three is infected.

An alarming bulletin from the height of the nation's AIDS crisis in the mid-'80s? Nope. Twenty years after detection of the disease that decimated the nation's gay community—and 10 years after safer sex practices dramatically reduced its infection rates—AIDS is poised to cut a fresh swath from a new generation. Since 1990, the demographics of suffering have shifted massively into the heterosexual population, especially overseas. But for American gay men, particularly men of color, the specter of AIDS has staying power.

"You can't help but be shocked by the level of infection in the population," says Ernest Hopkins, director of federal affairs for the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. "This is well beyond what we guessed was happening. People don't know quite what to do."

Fueling the headlines—and the anxiety—are the results of a CDC survey drawn from nearly 3,000 interviews in six major cities between 1998 and 2000 outside gay-oriented organizations, stores, bars and dance clubs with men who have sex with men. The respondents, all between the ages of 23 and 29, reported their HIV status and, if positive, when they had learned of their infection. In all, 13 percent reported testing positive, 4.4 percent in the past year. Most unsettling: 32 percent of black men surveyed were positive, and almost 15 percent had tested positive within the past year alone.

Blaring from the front pages of many major dailies, the report ended five years of diminishing AIDS coverage that focused on the impact of so-called AIDS cocktails. The combination therapies, which blend various drugs proven to suppress the retrovirus at the root of the disease, have sustained the lives of many long-term sufferers. But this masked a breakdown in safer sex practices in general society, including the gay community. Tim McFeeley, political director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, chides a collective sense of "complacency about the disease within our community," especially, he says, "among young people who do not remember the early stages of the epidemic."

AIDS has been inextricably linked with gay men since the June 1981 announcement of a new plague besetting a handful of homosexuals in Los Angeles. As hundreds fell ill and died in the early Reagan years, politicians and the non-gay media mostly ignored the health crisis that hit hardest and rippled outward from gay enclaves in Boston, New York and San

Francisco. Roused by the mounting body count, gay men launched vigorous safer sex campaigns focused on condom use and monogamy. Coupled with fiery demonstrations aimed at lowering prices for anti-AIDS drugs and public funding for AIDS research and treatment, the safe sex campaign soon helped drive new infection rates among gay men as low as 1.6 percent per year by the early '90s.

Yet public health experts and AIDS activists lament the apparent failure of programs geared toward young men and men of color. Since gays of color are less eager to self-identify as gay, Hopkins says messages may be more effective if aimed



Immy Ferrara displays a photo of her son Philip Jr., who died of AIDS.

AKIRA SUWAPHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

at "men who have sex with men" or simply "sexually active men." Second, "There are virtually no black and Latino gay neighborhoods" where gays of color feel comfortable enough to talk candidly about their sexual behavior. As a solution, Hopkins promotes programs such as Black Brothers Esteem in the Tenderloin section of San Francisco, aimed at developing better sexual decision-making skills among African-American men.

As for targeting youth, Helene Gayle, who oversees prevention programs for the CDC, preaches "the need to reach each generation of gay and bisexual men early—and sustain those efforts as they age." But Gayle's injunction runs counter to the new secretary of health and human services, Tommy Thompson. On June 5 Thompson advocated boosting the funding for "abstinence only" sex education. Funding for the programs bar schools that take it from responding to teens' queries about their actual sexual activity.

The National Campaign To Prevent Teen Pregnancy recently reviewed more than 250 sex-ed programs and found no evidence that sex-ed increases teen sexual experimentation. The study also found no hint that abstinence-only programs work. Still, Thompson appears ready to bow to pressure from religious conservatives to curb straightforward sex education, which they allege spurs sexual exploration and promiscuity, and to expand abstinence-only programs.

If the chill in the political climate makes frank sex education a pipe dream, gay-sensitive sex education, much less programs aimed at minority audiences, remains a mirage. Consequently, many AIDS educators rely on private sources, including foundations, nonprofit groups and progressive religious denominations to train parents, teens and twenty-somethings about safer sex.

"This situation is a tragedy," concludes Hopkins. "When [policy-makers] do tune into this issue, they seem to want some kind of simple, one-size-fits-all method of tackling the epidemic. But it's one of the most difficult lessons of our work so far on AIDS that this approach doesn't work." ■

IN DEFENSE OF IDENTITY POLITICS

By MARTIN DUBERMAN

In recent years there has been a mounting attack on "identity politics," political groupings that push agendas based on race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. Such politics, it has been argued, hardens boundaries between oppressed groups and, further, prevents them from mobilizing collectively around the more important issues of class division and economic inequity.

In his 1995 book, *The Twilight of Common Dreams*, Todd Gitlin characterized "identity politics" as "groups overly concerned with protecting and purifying what they imagine to be their identities." Not only are these groups self-deluded, but, according to Gitlin, "Identity politics is an American tragedy ... a very bad turn, a detour into quicksand."

Since 1995, Gitlin's thesis has found wide currency among straight white men on the left. Their common argument goes along these lines: No substantial or unified left exists today. Instead there are "several small lefts" and "disconnected shards." (No quarrel yet.) Among these fragments are remnants of the '60s civil rights movement, some segments of organized labor, some environmentalists and various activists for the disabled, the aged and the homeless. Towering above all these, the vanguard, as it were, are the "identity movements," the multiculturalists, each group out for itself, none with an analysis of what unites people.

The critics of identity politics (including some gay critics, like Andrew Sullivan) insist that multiculturalists must "stretch beyond" their cultures and identities, beyond a shaky coalition of outgroups, beyond the demands that have, according to Michael Tomasky, "nothing to do with a larger concern for our common humanity and everything to do with a narrow concern for fragmented and supposedly oppositional cultures." Others who have inveighed against identity politics usually do so in comparably patronizing terms. Ralph Nader told us, for example, that "gonadal politics" are a trivializing distraction from the genuinely important agenda of economic issues.

Those on the left who inveigh against identity politics assume that "class" is the transcendent category, and issues relating to gender, race and sexuality are marginalized as comparatively insignificant. Among the many confusions in attempting to establish a hierarchy of what is the "most" or "least" important social issue is a bottom-line unawareness of how these struggles intersect.

The labor movement itself can quite reasonably be described as historically based on identity politics: For a long period it exclusively defended "its own." Class solidarity was reduced to protecting union members *against* the great unwashed, unorganized mass of female and nonwhite workers. Indeed, racism, sexism and homophobia in the workplace inescapably affect how and whether workers will see their

grievances as ones held in common. Until the CIO came along in the '30s, black workers were essentially barred from union membership, and are still not fully welcome in some industries like construction. Many working-class whites have long since chosen to identify with their skin color rather than with "alien others" (especially blacks) who share their class oppression; it has been more important to declare their superiority to blacks—and their primary bond with fellow whites of all classes—than to collaborate with "inferiors" in a protest movement based on class.

In other words, long before identity politics purportedly pushed the white working class to the right, its own conservative cultural views had long since solidly planted it there. "Class," in other words, is inherently a cultural issue; solidarity based on economic issues can never come about until divisions based on gender, race and sexuality are recognized (even if not resolved) as central to achieving such a goal.

As Amber Hollibaugh has argued in her recent book, *My Dangerous Desires*: "I don't think the union movement can survive if people don't see it as part of their culture. ... Issues that are specific to their individual social experiences have to emerge ... but gay people are working-class people ... they need to be able to bring their queer, working-class selves out to the union. ... Does the union movement want its children or not? That's the real question."

To which I would add a second "real question": Is the gay movement ever going to be willing to take on the class dimensions of its own struggle? To date, it has not. And that is why most national gay organizations push for agendas (gay marriage, gays in the military) that do not resonate for, say, working-class dykes concerned about issues relating to shrinking real income or dead-end jobs or HIV or substance abuse or domestic violence.

If we in the gay movement need to recognize class-based issues more, the critics of identity politics need to understand that issues relating to gender and sexuality are not trivial, but central to people's lives.

Instead of such recognition, we are subject to lectures about the relative unimportance of *our* issues, chastising us for our "narrow" concern with our "supposedly" oppositional cultures. Our critics continually refer to identity politics as a "distraction." They refer to "faux-radical multiculturalism" and its "superficially transgressive ideas."

But declaring certain ideas superficial does not make them so—especially since it is far from clear that these critics have remotely understood them. They need to draw their chairs in closer and listen harder to the intricate conversations taking place on the multicultural left. The radical redefinitions of gender and sexuality that are under discussion (and contention) in

feminist and queer circles contain a potentially transformative challenge to what has been called "regimes of the normal."

The critics of identity politics give no sign that they have actually read, let alone absorbed, the work of queer theorists like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Jeffrey Weeks, Michael Warner, Wayne Koestenbaum or Judith Butler—to name only a few of the more prominent. A large body of work now exists that, taken together, presents a startling set of postulates about such matters of *universal* importance as the historicity and fluidity of sexual desire, the performative nature of gender, and the complex multiplicity of attractions, fantasies, impulses and narratives that lie within us all.

These are not small, narrow, superficial matters of concern only to the self-absorbed few—ignorance alone allows them to be so characterized. Were the anti-identity politics crowd to open its ears and refuse to settle for *Reader's Digest* versions of feminist and gay analysis, it would have to come to grips with any number of discomfiting notions.

To understand how and why sexual and gender identities get socially constructed is, in fact, to open up a new way of talking about politics, of talking about how relations of power get established, about the role of the state in reinforcing and policing that set of relations in the name of maintaining the stakes of the already privileged. Try to imagine the consequences, for example, of reconsidering, as feminist and queer theorists have been asking us to do, traditional definitions of gender. Is it fair to men (we know it isn't fair to anyone else) to be viewed as inflexible, driven engines of action, accumulation and domination? A freer definition of the male self, the heightened ability of men to embrace the *varied* impulses within, could loosen their iron drive for control, their over-representation in positions of power, their unmodulated resort to violence as the preferred means for resolving conflict. These are *emancipatory* possibilities—for everyone. They could lead us back to that unfinished dialogue from the '60s about the nature of "human nature," about the need for personal transformation to precede or accompany any lasting social transformation.

This is hardly an ersatz sideshow. It is instead a matter of the non-feminist, non-queer left not bothering to *listen*, not taking seriously the foundational work being done on gender and sexuality. If it were listening, it would find potent tools at hand for informing the struggle against entrenched class (and race and gender) hierarchies of privilege and power about which they care so much.

The ideas being generated on the multicultural left are not "supposedly" oppositional; they are fundamentally so. They have *everything* to do with the "larger concern for our com-

mon humanity" that our critics loudly insist is absent from identity politics. Perhaps henceforth, when we talk about "re-envisioning the left," we need to put high on the agenda (it is now nowhere in sight) the patronizing inability or unwillingness of many on the left to take seriously the far-reaching work being done in feminist and queer circles.

Moreover, a long-standing debate has been going on among multiculturalists themselves about the inadequacy, incompleteness or possible transience of identity labels like "black" or "gay" or "Latino." Many minority intellectuals are troubled about the inability of overarching categories or labels to represent accurately the complexities and sometimes overlapping identities of individual lives. We are also uncomfortable referring to "communities" as if they were homogenous units rather than the hothouses of contradiction

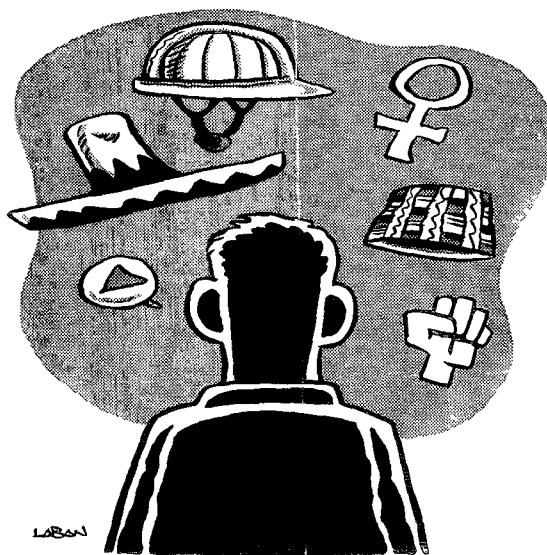
they actually are. We're concerned, too, about the inadequacy of efforts to create bridges *between* marginalized people and then extensions outward to broader constituencies.

Yet we hold on to a group identity, despite its insufficiencies, because for most non-mainstream people it's the closest we have ever gotten to having a political home—and voice. Yes, identity politics reduces and simplifies. Yes, it is a kind of prison. But it is also, paradoxically, a haven. It is at once confining *and* empowering. And in the absence of alternative havens, group identity will for many of us continue to be the appropriate site of resistance and the main source of comfort.

The anti-multiculturalists' high-flown, hectoring rhetoric about the need to transcend these allegiances, to become "universal human beings with universal rights," rings hollow

and hypocritical. It is difficult to march into the sunset as a "civic community" with a "common culture" when the legitimacy of our differentness as minorities has not yet been more than superficially acknowledged—let alone safeguarded. You cannot link arms under a universalist banner when you can't find your own name on it. A minority identity may be contingent or incomplete, but that does not make it fabricated or needless. And cultural unity cannot be purchased at the cost of cultural erasure. ■

Martin Duberman teaches history at CUNY. This article was adapted from an essay in his most recent book, *Left Out* (Basic Books). His play on the life of Emma Goldman will be produced this coming season at Rattlestick Theater in New York. He is completing a novel on the Haymarket Affair.



TERRY LABAN

IF THE GAY MOVEMENT NEEDS TO RECOGNIZE CLASS-BASED ISSUES MORE, THE CRITICS OF IDENTITY POLITICS NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT ISSUES RELATING TO GENDER AND SEXUALITY ARE NOT TRIVIAL, BUT CENTRAL TO PEOPLE'S LIVES.

It's Up to You, New York

By Bill Boisvert

No man who owns his house and lot can be a Communist," wrote William J. Levitt, developer of the arch-suburb Levittown. It's a dictum taken very much to heart by Daniel Lazare in his new book *America's Unde-*

America's Undeclared War: What's Killing Our Cities and How We Can Stop It
By Daniel Lazare
Harcourt
353 pages, \$26

clared War: What's Killing Our Cities and How We Can Stop It. Lazare is one of the most stimulating writers on the left today, and a fierce partisan of big cities. He is suspicious of the deeply held prejudice that rural life is inherently more authentic than the city and that society must be organically linked to soil and family—a prejudice that lies at the root of the suburban dream of the single-family home set in a verdant lawn. This view is deeply undemocratic, he asserts, and should be stood on its head. Only in dense urban communities, he contends, do people develop the social solidarity and awareness of common interests necessary to formulate collective goals and advance them politically. The General Will is thus organically linked to the city; socialism, the ultimate expression of the General Will, is impossible in a suburban nation.

Lazare combines the anthropological bent of urban studies with a penchant for grand political philosophy in a way that distances him from much left-wing urbanist literature. In keeping with the left's growing preoccupation with the local and indigenous, left-wing urbanists tend to focus on gentrification, seeing the primary urban issue as the

defense of minority and bohemian subcultures besieged, like rainforest tribes, by the forces of Starbucks. Lazare belongs to an older, more swaggering Marxist tradition, one that saw itself as the vanguard of a universalizing modernity, industrial and cosmopolitan, headquartered in Paris and Petrograd, the great cities of revolution. In contrast to the defensive, often elegiac tone of urban studies, Lazare writes with a confident assurance that cities and the General Will are in lockstep, opposed to the suburbanites who stand athwart the march of history. It's a provocative, even stirring vision, but it contains contradictions that Lazare never quite reconciles.

In *The Frozen Republic* (1996), an attack on the Constitution, Lazare argued that our system of checks and balances, limited government and states'

fever epidemic devastated Philadelphia. Urban masses were the antithesis of his ideal society of self-sufficient yeoman farmers. Hamilton, a dyed-in-the-wool New Yorker, celebrated cities as hot-houses for the manufacturing and industry that would carry the nation into a prosperous future.

The antagonism between agrarian populism and urban industrialism was bound up in other tensions—constitutional battles between states and the national government, friction between Southern slaveocracy and Yankee capitalism. Lazare argues that these conflicts were a clash between two distinct civilizations—one agrarian, racist, hierarchical, suspicious of progress, dominated by lazy planters with their cringing slaves; the other urban, dynamic, egalitarian and socially fluid, filled with innovative businesses and contentious workers.

There's no doubt which side Lazare is on. He revels in descriptions of the idiocy of rural life. "Good country, this, for lazy fellows," he quotes one Kentucky traveler, "they plant corn, turn their pigs into the woods, and ... lounge about the rest of the year." What a contrast to the "restless, enterprising, urban spirit" that "built mills, churches, school-houses, towns and cities ... as if by magic."



Is this what the revolution looks like?

rights put a conservative stranglehold on politics. In *America's Undeclared War*, he extends this critique to explore the anti-urban dimension of America's conflicts over the Constitution and popular democracy. He traces this history back to the ideological rift between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton. Jefferson hated cities and rejoiced from his Monticello retreat when a yellow

Colonial Boston was "the loftiest peak" of freedom in America, full of newspapers and pamphlets and sexual transgression ("the 'Whores of Boston' were famous"). When the colonial Governor himself ordered a group of laborers to make way for his carriage, one sturdy workman informed him that "I am as good flesh and blood as you ... you may get out of the way."

The Civil War marked “a victory ... for a specifically urban form of democracy” based on “equality and free labor.” But even as the urban-industrial order crushed the Slave Power, it faced a resurgent anti-urbanism, this time from the same capitalist interests that had called it into being. As industrial workers poured into the cities, business and government leaders grew nervous at the prospect of a huge, largely immigrant, politically turbulent proletariat encamped in the centers of finance and industry. Paralyzing railroad strikes in 1877 and 1893 underscored the ease with which urban workers might seize the commanding heights of the economy.

At the same time, farmers and small-town businessmen unable to compete in the developing nationwide corporate economy scapegoated cities as the nexus of the economic forces that were ruining them. Populists saw the city as a parasite upon the productive countryside; industrialists saw it as a breeding ground for socialism and insurrection; and everyone saw it as a den of political corruption and illicit sex. A modern economy was unimaginable without the industrial city, yet to the anti-urban consensus the industrial city fatally undermined the social order itself.

The 20th century suburb, Lazare suggests, defused the crisis by transforming the industrial work force into an approximation of a Jeffersonian yeomanry. If the self-sufficient farmer was obsolete, he could be updated in the form of the suburban homeowner, secure on his plot of land and a stable pillar of the capitalist system. Henry Ford was both architect and apostle of this transformation. He not only mass-produced the cars that dispersed city populations into the countryside, he also articulated a grand social vision of workers tooling back and forth from their suburban cottages to the factory, safely bypassing the crowding, vice and Jewish-Bolshevik subversion rampant in the city (a vision that inspired Adolf Hitler, a Ford admirer, to construct Germany's autobahn system).

But the Fordist suburb, Lazare says, could only be realized through massive state intervention. From the New Deal onward, the federal government stacked the deck in favor of suburbanization through a myriad of subsidies for single-

family homes, from loan guarantees to mortgage interest and property tax deductions. It also built a vast network of highways and roads to knit together sprawling, low-density subdivisions. Far from a spontaneous outgrowth of the consumer's longing for cars and lawns, suburbanization required government social engineering on an epic scale. This unprecedented mobilization of public resources around an anti-urban agenda dealt the cities—choked with traffic, eviscerated by expressways, their population and tax base hemorrhaging into the suburbs—a fatal blow.

Lazare presents this history with style and verve. Unfortunately, he often oversimplifies. He says nothing about the 1863 draft riots in New York, in which dozens of blacks were lynched by

Americans are aware of the costs of the suburb, even if they're not willing to pay them. Let's face it: The working class wants SUVs.

whites opposed to the war against the South. How does that fit into his urban-Yankee-vs.-Southern-planter template? This is just one instance of his tendency to romanticize city life, an impulse that distorts the context of anti-urban reform efforts.

Although historians are unanimous that the 19th century slum was a very unhealthy place, Lazare speculates perversely that the health of tenement dwellers may have been improved by overcrowding. He is untroubled by urban child labor; young street vendors were “bold adventurers who symbolized all that was free and anarchic. ... Compared to the suburban ennui ... of middle class children in subsequent decades, their existence was in many ways a childhood idyll.” He is untroubled by urban prostitution, rhapsodizing the “whores' meaty legs” sprawled across the sidewalks of old New York. He is particularly untroubled by the combina-

tion of child labor with prostitution, which, he foresees, somewhat wistfully, in our re-urbanized future: “Perhaps the more enterprising [city kids] would land jobs running errands for the neighborhood bordello ...” he writes, trailing off in a winking ellipsis. While the apocalyptic tone of anti-urban writings (which Lazare insightfully reviews) makes the city a stand-in for all the ills of modernity, not all such misgivings were mere reactionary propaganda. Industrial cities were bad enough to make so staunch a friend of the working class as Engels blanch.

Lazare's attack on contemporary suburbia is as jaundiced as his praise of cities is rose-colored. Suburbs are bastions of conformity and consumerism that geographically segregate by race and class; they tie us to cars that pump pollutants and greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and tie us up in traffic all day; they make America uglier with strip malls and parking lots; they make Americans uglier, since driving-instead-of-walking promotes obesity. Suburbia is a welfare state, dependent on hundreds of billions of dollars a year in hidden government subsidies for houses and autos. Suburbia is a “bottomless black hole sucking up energy and wealth,” Lazare broods. It “is boring to its depths. One feels the enervation, the deep entropy the moment one sets foot in a subdivision or mall.”

Far from being a marginal view, Lazare's critique is a familiar one, widely accepted by social critics, architects and disaffected teen-agers. Lazare takes it to a new level of venom which, harping as he does on the artificiality and degeneracy of suburban life, repackages many of the older anti-city screeds. Suburbs make us soft and fat and dependent on handouts; they distance us from our fellow men; they sexually denature us, removing us from the conviviality of the neighborhood bawdy house to the masturbatory confines of the Internet porn site. Worst of all, by transforming the proletariat into politically atomized property holders, suburbs sap the General Will. By grounding society in detached private houses and automobiles, suburbs promote “an extreme form of individualism in which each person [is] encouraged to define his own interests in opposition to those of society around him.” Suburbia is “the asocial society.”

This doesn't quite add up. According to Lazare, when the General Will moved out to the suburbs it lost itself in yard work and PTA meetings. But by any measure, the postwar heyday of suburbanization was an unusually *active* period for popular democracy and the General Will, which managed to carry through the Great Society, the civil rights movement, the counterculture and feminism. Nor do left-right political divisions correlate neatly with the urban-suburban divide. Canada, for example, a largely suburban nation like the United States, is by comparison a social-democratic paradise. And Detroit, which is really a giant suburb built almost exclusively of single-family houses, was long a bastion of working-class militance. And why exactly did the working classes flock so eagerly to the suburbs?

Lazare's polemic is often intemperate and unfair, but the deeper problem is that it is tragically right. The General Will will not be denied, but if anything can be said to express the General Will, it's suburbia. I say this as a New Yorker very much in tune with Lazare. The suburb strikes me as an affront to nature and to common sense, one whose waste of land, building materials and fossil fuels grows more glaring in an era of global warming and resource depletion. As Lazare says, the suburban dream of urban amenities in bucolic surroundings is a dangerous one that will make the planet implode if the rest of the world follows America's lead. But there's no denying the power of this dream to capture the imagination.

Yes, it is heavily subsidized (the General Will usually is). But simply ending the gravy train, even if it were politically feasible, would not necessarily do in suburbia. Lazare proposes abolishing subsidies like mortgage interest and property tax deductions. But most taxpayers don't itemize, and so don't even bother taking these deductions—they go mostly to upper class homeowners who can afford their manses without them. Lazare also wants to hike the gas tax. By adding up all auto "externalities," including the costs of noise pollution and sending aircraft carriers to the Persian Gulf, Lazare arrives at a tax of \$10 per gallon. But the probable upshot of this would be to give a new lease on life to electric and fuel-cell cars; and

anyway, any politician who proposed it would be lynched. Somewhat desperately, Lazare looks to "the working class ... who have suffered the most from deurbanization" to launch the anti-suburban revolution, but let's be honest: The working class wants SUVs.

This is not false consciousness. Americans are aware of the costs of the suburb, even if they're not willing to pay them. We complain about traffic and fret over global warming, but we drive nonetheless. The dysfunctions of suburban family life are staples of popular culture, from *American Beauty* to *The Sopranos*. Nor are we immune to the alluring alternatives of city life. The word-association followup to "urban" is no longer "decay," it's "professional." From watching the comely sophisticates on *Friends* and *Sex and the City*, we know that the big city is the ideal place

to live out the romantic comedy of young adulthood, before we move to the suburbs to raise families.

America has not had suburbs foisted upon it against its will. America likes suburbs, warts and all. But maybe, slowly, the General Will is drifting back to the big cities. New York's population grew by 650,000 in the '90s, the first substantial growth in many decades. I hope more come. I remember walking over the Brooklyn Bridge into Manhattan my first morning in New York. I was swept away by the city, by its crowds, its stupendous vigor, the thrilling mixture of intimacy and grandeur in its streets. It seemed, as Lazare says, the supreme expression of human collective life, and I remember thinking *everyone should live here*. ■

Bill Boisvert is an In These Times contributing editor.

Seeing Red

By A.S. Hamrah

Nobody likes a medley. Nature abhors a medley, and so does Art. Spare us the medleys.

By last winter or maybe before, TV ads had repeatedly informed us that a

Moulin Rouge
Directed by Baz Luhrmann

new film "from visionary director Baz Luhrmann" was imminent. Again and again the voice that booms portentously from movie trailers let us know that the visionary film *Moulin Rouge* was on its way, it was coming, it was about to be released and there was nothing we could do about it. It began to sound threatening, this "visionary" chant, like a warning, like Luhrmann was a Nostradamus with news of our destruction, news which for some reason he'd decided to impart in the form of a can-can musical with Nicole Kidman.

Luhrmann's previous effort, a fledgling visionary work called *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet*, which came out five years ago, made it seem unlikely that his latest would be a revelation. Sure, it would probably be a self-consciously postmodern hash of other

people's leftovers, served with candy hearts instead of potatoes, but visionary? You hear "visionary," you picture William Blake, not one of those three-layer greeting cards that plays "Love Is a Many Splendored Thing" when you open it. To remind us that lost love conquers all if you turn it into art—especially when the movie's "all"

**Poet Ken in
Consumptive-
Prostitute Barbie's
Montmartre
Playhouse, with all
the accessories your
parents can wrap up
at Christmas.**

conquers whatever love it meant to evoke—isn't a revelation, even if it admits it's a cliché and is proud of it.

So maybe "visionary" is not the right word. But it sounds nice, "visionary." Maybe it's in Luhrmann's contract. He

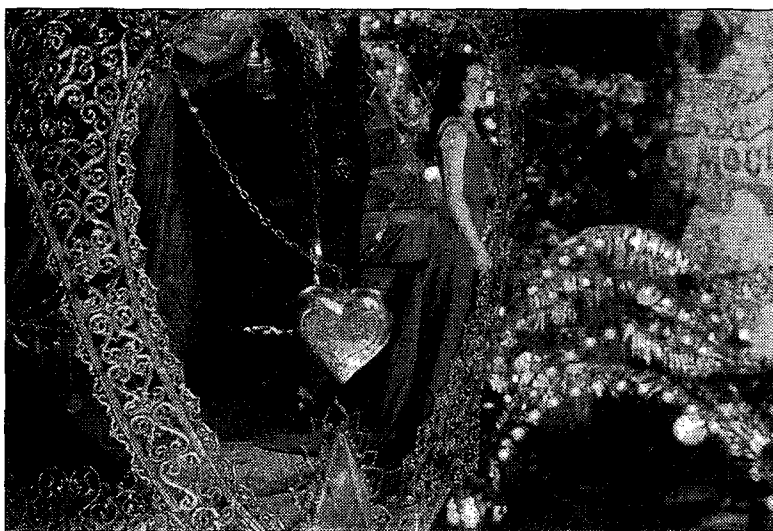
has a Visionary Clause. You say my name, you say "visionary" first. So officially anyway, he's a visionary. Why not? Doesn't cost the studio a dime.

Here's a news item from France, however, that cost the studio a pretty penny in promotions and party decorations. At the Cannes film festival, *Moulin Rouge* got a six-minute standing ovation. In their day they have booed Antonioni's *L'Avventura*, Dreyer's *Gertrud*, Bresson's *L'Argent* and Jarmusch's *Dead Man*, but in 2001 they rose to their feet for *Moulin Rouge* and stayed there for one-tenth of an hour. Doesn't that prove Luhrmann's bona fide? He's a visionary all right: He sees things you don't. He saw France, he saw Nicole Kidman's underpants, evidently he's also seen *Children of Paradise*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *A Clockwork Orange*, *One from the Heart*, *City of Lost Children* and *Hawaii Five-O*.

That's right, *Hawaii Five-O*. How's that for pomo pastiche? Stealing from those other movies, that's predictable; add *Hawaii Five-O*, you get a standing O. Thus in *Moulin Rouge*, Ewan McGregor poses on his writer's-garret balcony in 1899 Paris like he's Steve McGarrett in the credits to the beloved '70s cop show; the camera flies over the city right into his hairstyle. Was it the garret/McGarret connection that inspired Luhrmann to swoop like that? McGregor, McGarrett? McGregor's character is named Christian, Steve McGarrett was played by Jack Lord. Both characters approach their work religiously. They loom over vice-ridden cities and look down, and only they can make order from the confusion below. In the end, love's not for them. They have a higher calling.

O.K., maybe this is an unproductive line of inquiry. You don't question a visionary, you just receive his vision and you luxuriate in it until you're puckered. Luhrmann's frenetic, over-stuffed approach is designed to thwart criticism or even reflection. He insists that his film's hollowness is beside the

point, or that without the emptiness at its core his film wouldn't be the celebration he intended. For all its undemanding visual opulence, *Moulin Rouge* demands that you never look away, for fear that you might miss something even more dazzling than what came before. But in the end it's not the kind of film you watch, it's the kind of film you have on. The feeling that it's



Les fleurs du mélange.

having you on is as inescapable as its oppressive production design, a claustrophobic scheme seemingly inspired by a board game Vincent Price used to advertise in the '70s.

Moulin Rouge is a musical without a complete musical number, a dance film without a dance sequence, a film about a writer that wasn't written. It was cobbled together by choosing only the most obvious post-Beatles song lyrics to animate its repetitive situations, and it tries to convince you that it's reinvigorating those song lyrics as it embraces pop cliché so it can bring you a higher love.

It owes a lot to Madonna, who's invoked in its music-video style and by quoting lyrics from her songs. When Nicole Kidman is introduced as Satine, principal dancer at the Moulin Rouge and noted courtesan, an ominous version of "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend" passes dubbed through her lips, and Luhrmann has her combine it with a line from "Material Girl." To fully appreciate how clever this is, you have to know that Madonna's video for that song recreated Marilyn Monroe's "Diamonds"

number from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. Above Kidman's head, a sign at the top of the stage reads "Diamants," and the narration (of course there's narration) informs us of the dancers that the habitués of the nightclub "called them the diamond dogs." Digital diamond dust falls over the scene, diamond jewelry is proffered and snatched everywhere. We're unavoidably reminded that diamonds are forever, in case we forgot.

This kind of sensory overkill—where what is seen is said and what is said is seen—proves Luhrmann thinks his audience is both desperate and easily entertained; that it has an attention span shorter than John Leguizamo's throwaway dwarf character Toulouse; that it doesn't know how to read and would be offended if it were asked to. When McGregor types out "The End" as the film ends, he reads it on the soundtrack, too. Just to be sure the audience knows what to do at that point, the sound of applause accompanies a falling curtain.

Kidman, who also recalls Rita Hayworth in *Gilda* (she can't help it), is all alone out there; Luhrmann, so busy splashing everything with the froth used to dye carnations and turn beer green, forgot to direct her. Her voice is disembodied, piped-in. McGregor offers no help. Their scenes together play like they were shot at the opposite ends of a tunnel. They're sexless and dull even when embracing naked.

The other actors are displayed in boxes and piled up. Crammed into small spaces the better to make funny faces in close-up, none of them seem like they were ever in the same room together. They're reduced to moustaches and lip-stick. A whole troupe of dancers is on hand; none of them is given a personality or dialogue. Luhrmann cuts every scene so there is no scene, just a series of music video fragments, and no emotion creeps in, although the characters weep and wail and kick.

Jim Broadbent, a likable actor cast as the nightclub's impresario, comes off as so desperate to escape Luhrmann's Captain Kangaroo conception of his character that he channels the prop-comic Rip Taylor to keep himself interested. Richard Roxburgh's Duke, a stock villain, would've been better portrayed by *Spinal Tap*'s Michael McKean. At least he knows that to be funny, you don't act funny. No one is funny in *Moulin Rouge*. When Luhrmann directs them, he directs them to be hilarious.

The words "amoral" and "bohemian" are constantly rolled around in this film's mouth, but *Moulin Rouge* is as amoral and bohemian as *My Little Pony*. Its art-vs.-commerce plot is designed to touch the heart of the 11-year-old girl inside the window dresser in all of us, and it has all the tragic romance of a date with Poet Ken in Consumptive-Prostitute Barbie's

Montmartre Playhouse, complete with all the accessories your parents could wrap up at Christmas.

By the film's end, you hope for the triumph of commerce over art, surely the film's subconscious message all along. *Moulin Rouge* seeks to convince us that, today, Elton John and Baudelaire amount to the same thing, and it makes you never want to hear the word "spectacular" again, much less see one. If its goal was to reveal the emptiness of postmodern bricolage at the blockbuster level, it has succeeded. By any other standard, it's a mess. Its cleverness is greasy. The medleys in a Shriner's parade are more thrilling. When you're a visionary, there's a lot of stuff you don't have to do. Baz Luhrmann has exercised his prerogative, and how. ■

A.S. Hamrah also writes for *Hermenaut and Suck.com*. He can be reached at hamrah@hermenaut.com.

Early GBV was branded by Pollard's distinctive brew of nonsensical lyrics. Allusive to nothing, yet strangely evocative of something familiar, at their best Pollard's songs inspire a soft nostalgia or, more generally, a feeling of personal identification with an unspecified (or out-of-sight) object. Preoccupied with boy's things like UFOs, rock 'n' roll, atoms and airplanes, both Pollard and former sideman Tobin Sprout wrote 90-second songs that pulled your heart strings in the strangest directions.

The early tunes are filled alternately with apology and strength; most, unlike so much indie-schlock, are love songs of a sort. "I Am a Scientist" from *Bee Thousand* (1994) is a kind of explanation of shortcomings to a lover; the song delivers a sweet, twangy little pop melody (guitar and drums only) and lyrics teeming with the self-awareness and self-pity that marks so many indie-rockers ("I am a journalist / I write to you to show you / I am an incurable / and nothing else behaves like me"). On the flip side, "As We Go Up, We Go Down," a modernist masterpiece on *Alien Lanes* (1995), bursts with Hegelian lyrics, declaring: "And see the truth is just a lie / I speak in monotone 'leave my fucking life alone' / As we go up we go down." Always the singer is misunderstood; sometimes he wants help and sometimes he doesn't.

But all was not pop; on the early records, bouncy melodies were tucked between more sinister, distorted guitar-focused songs with lyrics muffled or yelled. Sometimes they were kind of good (*Bee Thousand*'s "Her Psychology Today") and others not. But as the spaces between tracks were limited to about a half-second, those records felt like one big song with different movements. This changed with 1996's *Under the Bushes, Under the Stars*, though not yet for the worse. Better pro-

Make the Voices Stop

By Hillary Frey

In college, I had a roommate who made personalized bumper stickers for his friends. Mine? "I want my GBV!" From the moment I first heard

sounds more like an over-confident, slightly bored Michael Stipe than the Bud-drinking, Brit-intoned genius from Dayton, Ohio of yore.

Isolation Drills
Guided By Voices
TVT

Guided By Voices—the strange, low-fi band headed by ex-fourth grade teacher and beer enthusiast Robert Pollard—I've wanted my GBV. Just one problem: I can't find it.

This isn't for a lack of records released appearing from a band called "Guided By Voices." As you can see by the little box just above this, there's a new record out from GBV. But the band of merry men that stuck with Pollard through the early years are long gone, replaced by others who have been replaced in turn. And Pollard? These days he



"Hey, have you seen where our tunes went?"

duced, many fans defected from this record, complaining that GBV had gone slick. Although the record is more polished—as if for a special occasion—it's full of images and stories worthy of the early days. In 1997 the band put out *Mag Earwhig!*, a record notable for its tentative return to a low-fi aesthetic.

Which brings us to the two most recent GBV releases, 1999's *Do the Collapse* and the new *Isolation Drills*, both released on the TVT label, a move away from the independent tastemakers at Matador Records. Both critics and fans complained that *Do the Collapse* was over-produced, but that album (said over-production by Ric Ocasek of The Cars) at least had a handful of pretty decent songs on it. "Teenage FBI" is a winner on the merits of its title alone, and "Surgical Focus" has the signature swells and tensions of Pollard's best. Most of the others are throwaways, but they aren't nearly as boring as the stuff of *Isolation Drills*.

GBV have left Ocasek behind for Rob Schnapf, who has done terrific work before with the likes of Elliott Smith and Richard Thompson. But what he's done with Pollard here is make a record that sounds like other bands—REM, the Who, Big Star—instead of something that sounds like GBV. It's not just the production, though. It's Pollard getting a little too comfy; his lyrics this time around sound like someone trying to write a song that sounds like Robert Pollard. "Glad Girls," the first single from *Isolation Drills*, is a good example. Pollard repeats "Glad Girls / Only want to get you high" about 60 times before the song finally gives up. "Twilight Campfighter," probably the most promising tune on the album, just peters out. Each tune sounds so much like the last one.

On the second track on *Isolation Drills*, Pollard sings, "How's my drinking? I don't care about being sober." Maybe that explains it; Pollard, finally a rock star, has taken the Bud from the stage to the studio, and written an album that reflects it. But don't hold out for anything better. He winds up simply, with uncharacteristic directness, "I won't change." ■

Malcolm Frey is assistant literary editor of *The Nation*.

Violent

Continued from page 18

Ben Oakley, a sophomore from the soccer team, told *Salon's* Cullen that students picked on the boys "all the time," because they were in the Trench Coat Mafia, a clique of Columbine misfits who wore black trench coats to school. "The majority of [the Trench Coat Mafia] were gay," Oakley said. "So everyone would make fun of them."

These observations were reiterated by several self-described jocks from Columbine High who told unsubstantiated tales of the boys and their Trench Coat friends taking showers together, or "touching" each other or holding hands and groping in the school corridors. Friends of Klebold and Harris insisted that the boys were heterosexual, and using the naïve logic of adolescence, cited the fact that both had taken dates to the prom as "proof."

The truth may never be known. The boys probably had not sorted the issue out for themselves. Still, a kind of consensus has developed, fueled by persistent rumors in the Denver gay community that at least one of the boys was gay. Whatever the case, the fact remains that Littleton is a very bad place to be gay.

LaFrance knows this to be true. She and her husband Ray opened a teen haven in a coffeehouse setting called "The Place," in Littleton in July 1999, following the Columbine shootings. They expected to serve about 200 youngsters. During their 18 months of operation, the number reached 1,300. Remarkably, a survey identifies 20 percent of the teen visitors as "gay," 12 percent as "bisexual" and about 20 percent as "minorities." Located in a strip mall, their neighbors, including a fundamentalist Christian church, abhorred them. "The basic theme was total acceptance and tolerance," explains LaFrance. "If you pick a fight or call somebody a fag, you're out of here!"

LaFrance has worked with violent kids for 15 years. In the context of Columbine, her apparent sympathy for the bad guys made her immediately unpopular. Given the Christian tenor of the town, so did her comfort with

homosexuality. "Those who liked us called my chief volunteer and me 'Will and Grace.' The church next door called us 'the hell hole.'"

LaFrance recalls when one boy, who was sitting on the steps of The Place smoking, heard some other kids saying, "you faggot this and you faggot that." He asked them to stop, explaining, "because I'm gay." That evening when he went to his car he found it vandalized, the seat urinated on, and a Bible page left for his edification.

"He is a really together kid, and he just seemed to shrug it off," she says. "Not every kid could do that."

Indeed not. Especially not in rural and suburban America, where support for gay teens is scarce. A gay teen-ager who moved from Littleton to urban Denver told Cullen of his experiences coming out as gay in eighth grade at Deer Creek Middle School, which feeds students to Columbine. "One year everyone loved me," he said. "The next year I was the most hated kid in the whole school." Jocks were his worst tormentors, he said. He described one in particular who pelted him with rocks, wrote "faggot" and "we hate you" on his locker and taunted him in the hallway with: "I heard the faggot got butt-fucked last night."

"It gets to the point where you're crying in school because the people won't leave you alone," he said. "The teachers don't do anything about it." The boy attempted suicide several times that year, and eventually spent time in a mental hospital. "It can drive you to the point of insanity. What they want to do is make you cry. They want to hurt you. It's horrible. I hope that the one thing people learn out of this whole thing is to stop teasing people."

In the interview, the boy didn't condone what Harris and Klebold did, but said he understood what drove them over the edge. "They couldn't take it anymore, and instead of taking it out on themselves, they took it out on other people. I took it out on myself. But it was a daily thought: 'Boy, would I really like to hurt someone. Boy, would I like to see them dead.'" ■

Anthony Chase is a freelance writer in Buffalo, New York.

Classifieds

HELP WANTED

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MEDIA Alliance, a nonprofit dedicated to free speech and media democracy, seeks an energetic organizer for the position of E.D. Résumé, references by July 1 to E.D. Search, Media Alliance, 814 Mission St., #205, San Francisco, CA 94103, fax (415) 546-6218, e-mail ma@igc.org, www.media-alliance.org.

WORK AT AN INDEPENDENT, progressive magazine! *In These Times*, the award-winning alternative newsmagazine, is looking for editorial interns for its Chicago office this summer. Send a cover letter and resume to Kristin Kolb-Angelbeck, e-mail: kolb@inthesetimes.com (no attachments please); address: 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647.

BOOK EDITOR. NONPROFIT publisher of political nonfiction seeks editorial collective member. Required: 3 years' publishing experience. Excellent organizational, writing, interpersonal skills. Computer proficiency. \$32,800 (32-hour week) plus benefits. People of color encouraged. South End Press, 7 Brookline Street #1, Cambridge, MA 02139, FAX (617) 547-1333.

JOBS WITH JUSTICE, A UNION/ community coalition, seeks two FT organizers for workers' rights projects. Union or community organizing experience required, Spanish, Portuguese or Creole speakers preferred. \$30,000-34,000, health care, 3 weeks vacation. Send résumé to 3353 Washington St., Boston, MA 02130, or fax (617) 524-8996, or e-mail bostonjwj@mindspring.com.

PUBLICATIONS

CONFESSIONS of a diplomatic pouch clerk: www.pouchclerk.com

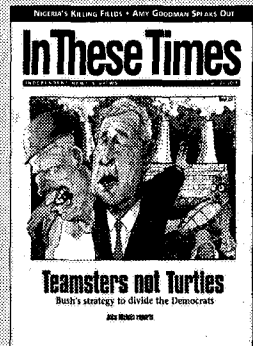
LANGUAGES

CENTRO MAYA: LEARN Spanish quickly, economically in beautiful Guatemalan Highlands, where reality is sweet, painful, significant. \$100-150 weekly covers 4-5 hours daily one-on-one instruction, full room-board. See www.centromaya.com. Email: maestros@centromaya.com

PERSONALS

Concerned Singles
links compatible singles who care about peace, social justice, gender equity, racism, and the environment. Nationwide. All ages. Straight/Gay. Since 1984. FREE SAMPLE: ☐ Box 444-IT, Lenox Dale, MA 01242; ☎ (413) 445-6309; OR ☐ <http://www.concernedsingles.com>

inthesetimes.com



New features:
• searchable archive
• updated research links
• Project Censored award winners

inthesetimes.com

THOMAS PAINE

VIDEOCASSETTE

This educational, "very informative," and "fascinating" 40-minute video, written and hosted by Thomas Paine Scholar Carl Shapiro, was telecast via cable TV throughout northern New Jersey in the spring of 1992. In this original, unedited video, the essential meaning of Paine's extraordinary career as revolutionary writer and foremost exponent of democratic principles is recounted in a presentation "sure in its content" and clear in its delivery. A discussion of little-known but significant incidents in Paine's life adds immeasurably to this memorable video.

VHS cassette **\$25.00** ppd. (USA)
INDEPENDENT PUBLICATIONS,
P.O. BOX 102, RIDGEFIELD, NJ 07657
www.freethoughtbooks.com



Read The Progressive Populist

A Journal from the Heartland with alternative news and views from Jim Hightower, Molly Ivins, Ralph Nader, Jesse Jackson, other muckrakers, agitators and the best of the nation's alternative press. . . . An antidote for your daily news. . . . Deflating pompous plutocrats since 1995.

Only \$29.95 for 22 issues.
For a free sample copy,
call toll-free 1-800-205-7067
or see www.populist.com

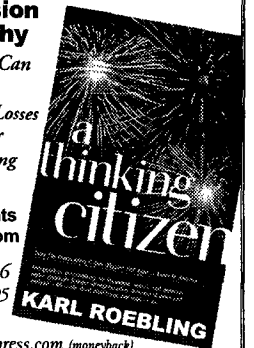
40 Topics Left Out of National Discussion - and Why

- Capsule Curriculum Can Change Education
- Billion A Day Trade Losses
- \$\$ Trillions From Air
- America is Reroyalizing
- 36 Others

View Table of Contents at www.dynapress.com

ISBN 0-942910-20-6
6" x 9" Paper 180 pp. \$10.95

TO ORDER www.dynapress.com (moneyback)
www.amazon.com
Books, Author Karl Roebling



SYLVIA

The Woman Who Lies in her personal Journal

oh, right, like it never crossed your mind.

I CALLED DONALD RUMSFELD. WE GO WAY BACK. "Donny," I SAID, "Just where is the money in the budget to pay for this Missile Defense System Boy-toy?" I KNEW DONNY IN HIGH SCHOOL. BACK THEN HE FELT WE NEEDED A DEFENSE SYSTEM TO PROTECT THE NEW ICE HOCKEY RINK FROM INVASION BY OTHER HIGH SCHOOL KIDS. "YOU HAD A SMALLER ALLOWANCE THEN, DONNY, BUT YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT!" I SAID... AND HUNG UP.



Nicole Hollander
6-13

By Nicole Hollander

Continued from page 30

the late '50s and early '60s, these racist attitudes began to change. Black pride, while chiefly seen as an African-American reaction to centuries of segregation and subordination, had its parallels among thinkers and activists in Africa. Indigenous expression took on fresh value. Some Europeans, meanwhile, began to idealize the African aesthetic, granting the status of high culture to what were once just seen as religious artifacts of tribal life and drawing important distinctions of style and skill between tribes.

Indeed, dozens of African tribes have significant—and still living—traditions in the visual arts: the Fang or Kuba in the Congo, the Asante or Fante in Ghana, the Dan or Baule in Ivory Coast, or the Dogon or Bambara in Mali are just a few examples. (For an introduction, gape at the gorgeously illustrated 1998 volume by Jean-Baptiste Bacquart, *The Tribal Arts of Africa*.) But after decades of steady interest in African tribal art by collectors, quality pieces no longer turn up consistently—and pieces made more than a century ago are exceedingly rare. Still, there are exceptions: The massive war in the Congo has boosted supply. As a recent U.N. report documented, the invading armies of Uganda, Rwanda, Angola and even Zimbabwe know enough not to stop at looting just diamonds and timber from the Congo; tribal art, often stolen directly from terrified villagers, also makes up part of the war booty. Looted Congolese pieces can quickly make their way to places as far away as the United States.

Today's looters are only carrying on a dubious European tradition. The British Museum has long presented a smattering of African objects throughout its rooms, and its ancient Egyptian collection is superb. Its new African Galleries are first-rate. And they should be: While collections in Belgium, France and Germany contain many valuable pieces, no other nation could match the British when it came to plundering so many art objects of a conquered people over so long a time period. The British Museum, the official repository for much of this material, controls 200,000 objects from Africa alone, which make up only a small part of its vast collection built on a foundation of Egyptian and Greek pieces.

The African Galleries contain more than 600 pieces, organized thematically, and mainly dating from the 19th and 20th centuries. The exhibit, which will be refreshed from the museum's collection about every two years, also contains a few contemporary pieces, such as a hippopotamus mask by the Nigerian artist Sokari Douglas Camp. But most of the

objects are tribal art, such as a Kuba royal statue from the early 18th century, the late 19th-century dance shields by the Kikuyu of Kenya or the elephant mask made of cotton and cowrie shells in Cameroon early last century.

Undoubtedly the centerpieces of the British Museum's collection are the arresting brass casts from Benin, a legendary African kingdom that is now part of contemporary Nigeria and reached its peak in the 15th century. The most special of these is a Yoruba brass head, one of the so-called "Ifé" castings. Benin casts are prized by West Africans, because they were made using techniques unknown to Europeans at the time. Indeed, the techniques were so superior to European metalwork that for a long time, art experts in the West insisted that the Benin people could not have learned this form of casting on their own. They said the casts must be the work of a Greek colony, perhaps even the mythical Atlantis. It wasn't until after World War II that the senior Africanist at the British Museum declared that the Ifé castings certainly predated any European influence on Benin's artists.

In an 1897 British invasion of what today is Nigeria, soldiers seized many of these casts, including what is now an entire wall on display in the galleries. "These objects should be returned," says Adama Gaye, publisher of the London-based *West Africa* magazine. "African countries are mature enough to manage this art, and it belongs to them."

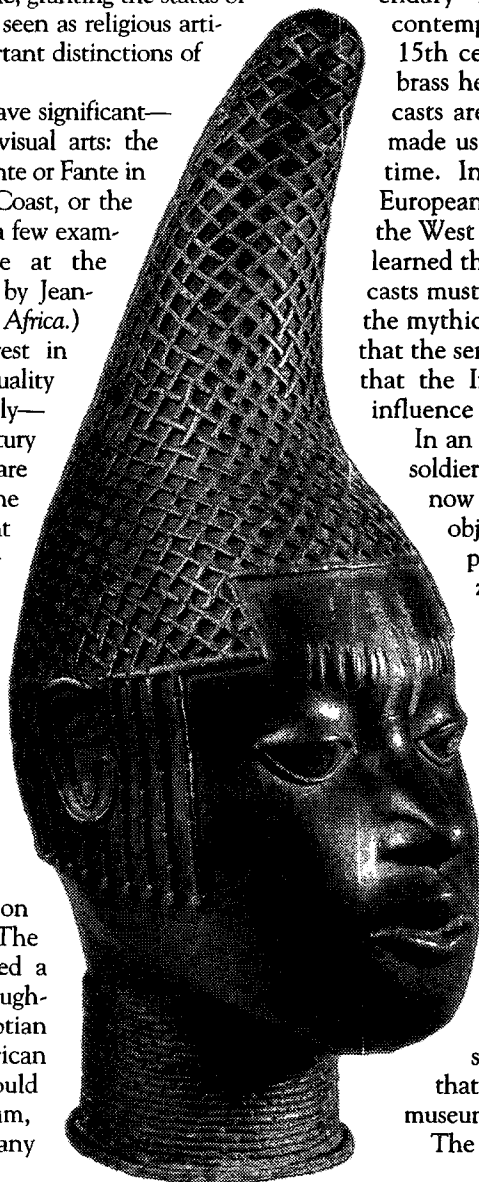
John Mack, the senior "keeper" of artifacts at the British Museum and an expert on African art who directed the creation of the new African Galleries, disagrees. Mack says that most African countries still lack the skills and resources to safeguard their most precious objects: "In many ways, these are better off with us."

Some Africans themselves agree, he says, citing the example of the Kuba tribe, some of whose objects are on display at the galleries. "The Kuba chief was here at the opening, and he plainly said that he was happy these objects weren't in the Congo, where they could be stolen," Mack says. The chief even complained that prized tribal art recently donated to a Congo museum has already been stolen.

The British insist that more African art is likely to shift to the West, rather than return home, if only because European and U.S. museums have the resources and expertise to preserve and safeguard these objects. This view is hard to dismiss. The reality is that in sub-Saharan Africa at least, governments have

more pressing needs than the task of art presentation and preservation. This is doubly tragic, because when Africa is dependent on the West for management of the very art that Africans can proudly call their own, it is Westerners who define what makes this art beautiful and valuable. ■

G. Pascal Zachary is an In These Times contributing editor and the author of *The Global Me*, on globalization, society and culture. He can be reached at Gregg.Zachary@wsj.com.



16th-century Benin casts like those pictured above and on page 30 were seized by British invaders in 1897; now they're on view at the British Museum. Would this art be safe back in Africa?

Out of Africa

Tribal art is a thriving business— but the colonial legacy remains

By G. Pascal Zachary

Nearly a half century since the decolonization of Africa, the question remains: Why is Europe still the best place to view or buy traditional and tribal African art?

While the world has started to pay attention to the collapse of health care systems in sub-Saharan Africa—and the concomitant spread of AIDS and the resurgence of “vanquished” diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis—little is said about the continent’s cultural collapse. The governments that have plundered the continent’s resources also have ignored the vast cultural treasures in their countries. Only African music retains a firm footing, because of its commercial base and vague attraction to listeners of Western pop.

But Africa’s great traditions of sculpture, mask-making and textile design are poorly recognized at home. Even behemoths such as Nigeria, Africa’s most populous nation, or South Africa, the richest nation of black Africa, boast no museums where visitors are presented with anything like the breadth, diversity and sheer quality of the art produced across the continent. Instead, museums in Africa tend toward the local and disconnected. And that’s in places where museum curators aren’t selling off pieces themselves or conspiring with thieves. To get a feel for the immense diversity of tribal African art requires a visit not to Africa, but to London, Paris, Berlin, Brussels, New York, Washington or Los Angeles.

This irony is all the more poignant because after centuries of denigrating tribal African art as mere anthropological curiosity, Western collectors and museum curators are now among its most devoted admirers—and they have helped make it a thriving business. While African statues and masks once went for a song, allowing shrewd collectors to assemble a gallery of gems on the cheap, this is no longer so. Quality pieces, dating from the 19th or early 20th century, routinely sell for tens of thousands of dol-

lars. A glossy catalog for an upcoming auction in Paris, for example, advertises more than 600 objects that represent the bulk of the collection of a recently deceased French collector, Hubert Goldet. The finest pieces, such as a Baule mask from the Ivory Coast or a finely carved ritual table from the Congo, are expected to sell for more than \$100,000 each, and many other pieces should fetch more than \$10,000.

These are high prices indeed for tribal art that, in the main, began to circulate as colonial booty. But this legacy of cultural plunder carries an ambiguous morality—in part because African elites never valued this art and took few steps to preserve it themselves.

This dilemma remains largely unacknowledged even as the cultural and monetary value of African art booms among a select group of Europeans and Americans.



Among the plunder from Africa, during the “great scramble” for control over the continent in the late 19th century, art counted among the highest prizes of imperialism. As the fruits of the looting of central Africa in particular began showing up in Europe, important artists took notice. Early in the 20th century, Africans inspired a bevy of Europeans, including Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, both of whom admired what was then viewed as the “primitive” or instinctive qualities of African sculpture and masks in particular. Max Ernst created bronze sculptures that bore striking resemblances to Africa’s wooden statues. The Italian sculptor Alberto Giacometti’s elongated and misshapen human figures owe a debt to African conceptions of beauty. (This link between modern art and tribal Africa is well documented in France’s National Museum of Modern Art and in the Picasso Museum, where African art owned by European artists is displayed alongside their own work, to revealing effect.)

Despite this influence, the 20th-century art world did not grant African art the kind of rarified status given to visual arts in the West. Africans, it was believed, lacked the intellectual capabilities and the emotional depth to produce art that matched the best of the West and Asia. With the wave of independence throughout Africa in

Continued on page 29